

JEAN-NOËL ALETTI

# **Justification by Faith in the Letters of Saint Paul Keys to Interpretation**

*Translated from the French by Peggy Manning Meyer*



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## INTRODUCTION

### The Pauline Doctrine of Justification

#### 1. The Essay's Objectives

So much has already been written on the Pauline doctrine of justification that the reader will probably ask what more could there possibly be to say on the subject. However, recent exegetical debates show that interest has not waned. And if the doctrine of justification has been considered as one of the major achievements of New Testament exegesis, recent debates have raised serious methodological and theological doubts: is Paul's discourse on the Law<sup>1</sup> well-founded, pertinent or erroneous? In other words, did he really understand the Judaism of his time? Exegetes have had to recognize that they knew little about the Judaism of the period. They also have had to admit to their sparse knowledge of Paul's rhetorical techniques and the function of the literary models he used. And yet, methodological and cultural knowledge is important for correctly tackling and treating the Pauline doctrine of justification. So here, with the help of these tools, the inquiry into this theme is undertaken in order (1) to furnish a more or less complete *status quaestionis* on the research, (2) to note and present the essential principles of the doctrine, synchronically and diachronically, and (3) to demonstrate the importance and the stakes of the doctrine for yesterday as well as for today.

#### 2. The Theme's Pertinence and Importance

##### 2.1. The Ecclesial Context, from the 16<sup>th</sup> Century to Today

For Luther, the Pauline doctrine of justification is the *articulus stantis vel cadentis Ecclesiae*, in other words: the fundamental and central dogma of Christianity, the heart of the Gospel<sup>2</sup>.

If, over the course of past centuries, the theme of justification in the Pauline letters has had such importance, it is because of the dispute between Protestants and Catholics that has existed since the Reformation. Luther insisted upon entirely gra-

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<sup>1</sup> With a capital letter, this word designates the Mosaic Law, in other words the Torah.

<sup>2</sup> *Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians* (1535), chap. 1: "The article of justification is indeed fundamental. If we remain sound in this one article, we remain sound in all the other articles of the Christian faith. When we teach justification by faith in Christ we confess at the same time that Christ is God".

tuitous justification effected by God in Christ, justification by faith alone, without works. By works, the latter was designating those required by the Church in order to be saved, those that make possible acquiring merits and thus attaining eternal life.

Since then, the question of justification has drawn a clear line between the two Christian confessions, a caricatural boundary, without a doubt, but one that is, nevertheless, real: justification without works for Protestantism and by works for Catholicism. This topic is still relevant even if the positions of the two camps have been noticeably modified since the Vatican II Council.

## 2.2. *In the Exegesis of the Sixties*

As one would imagine, New Testament exegesis reflected the respective confessional positions. Then in the sixties, the theory of the Canon within the Canon (Käsemann) was born, which necessitated determining which writings of the New Testament represent the Gospel and which move away from it in order to go towards a religion, like Judaism, based on works. For Protestantism, the letters of Paul represent the Gospel in all its purity and that of James, a return to works — and thus to merits, which in some way cause God to depend upon His subjects for retribution. Among the Gospels, that of Mark was also considered as a true representative of the Gospel, and the others, in particular that of Matthew, as an initial deviation from the original proclamation<sup>3</sup>:

True Representatives of the Gospel	First Deviations
the proto-Paulines	the letters from prison (Col, Eph)
Mark	the Pastorals and James Luke, Mt and John

In order to respond to such positions, it was not sufficient to examine the writings of the right-hand column and demonstrate that they did not deviate from the Gospel. It was also necessary to abandon the old representations concerning justification, the faith/works relationship, etc. It is interesting to note that it was the Protestants themselves who reexamined the doctrine of justification in various directions and thus overturned what was up to then considered an infrangible good.

## 2.3. *In the Pauline Letters*

The advocates of justification by faith alone did not hesitate to present the Jewish religion as typical of a religion based on works, and thus a perverse religion,

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<sup>3</sup> Cf. S. SCHULZ, *Die Mitte der Schrift*. Der Fröhenkatholizismus in Neuen Testament als Herausforderung an den Protestantismus (Berlin 1976).



and the Jew as the typical religious man who is looking to attain reward and salvation by works. On this point, the work of E.P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* (Philadelphia 1977) had a great influence because it showed that our knowledge of Judaism was caricatural and that it was necessary to wipe the slate clean of our preconceived ideas and our prejudices. Thus, one returned to an attentive and serious study of the Judaism that was contemporaneous to Paul (Qumran, the pseudepigrapha, Josephus, Philo, etc.). As a consequence, it was then necessary to verify whether or not Paul had a correct view of Judaism or if he were not the cause of the errors made by Christian interpretation throughout the centuries.

A collateral effect of the meticulous study of the writings of Paul was that some exegetes doubted the coherence of his thought concerning retribution, justification, etc. In fact, from one letter to another, and even within the same letter, the Apostle's affirmations do not always seem compatible. The most provocative study in this regard was that of H. Räisänen, *Paul and the Law*, which appeared in Tübingen in 1983.

In the wake of such charges or doubts about the reliability of Pauline thought, some studies have wanted to show that the doctrine of justification by faith alone was neither the most central nor the most important in the writings of Paul, that it was only owing to contingent difficulties. This provoked a series of essays on what is necessary to consider as central and as contingent (or even as obsolete and thus secondary) in Pauline theology. Let it suffice here to cite J.C. Beker, *The Triumph of God*, and J. Becker, *Paulus*<sup>4</sup>. The present essay is also proposing to locate the doctrine of justification within the panorama of Pauline theology and to determine its exact role: is it or is it not the center? Today, can one still consider it as an essential component of Pauline theology? Such questions will continually stimulate our own inquiry.

#### 2.4. *The Current Situation of the Exegesis on the Subject*

If the study of E.P. Sanders attacked the Lutheran reading head-on, in particular its view of the Jewish religion, and acted as a shock treatment, responses emerged that at first were limited and partial but that progressively became more and more radical in order to show that Sanders' ideas were not entirely acceptable or were even completely unacceptable<sup>5</sup>. If now positions are less monolithic than formerly, in particular those concerning Judaism — is it or is it not a legalistic religion? Is it or is it not a religion based on good works and merits? Can the Law be obeyed or

<sup>4</sup> English translation: *Paul. Apostle to the Gentiles* (Louisville, KY 1993).

<sup>5</sup> Cf., for ex., the monographs of M.A. Seifrid, S. Westerholm, de A. Das, and the collective work edited by D.A. Carson, P. O'Brien and the same Seifrid.

not? Is the Law or is it not a means of salvation? Was the Law ever a means of salvation or only before the coming of Christ? — the Lutheran reading has not been abandoned, its strong point being the rejection of a real justice for those who have been justified, their incapacity to want and to do good, in other words, their status of *simul justus et peccator*.

The positions of Protestant exegetes have recently (2010) been repeated and commented upon by J.C. Maschmeier in a dissertation entitled *Rechtfertigung bei Paulus*. As the state of the question that he makes is sufficiently panoramic, we do not need to repeat it. Although his monograph virtually ignores studies published in Italian and in French<sup>6</sup>, it, nevertheless, mentions, quickly but correctly, the recent positions of German Catholic exegetes on our subject<sup>7</sup>. Currently, there are numerous interpretations — on the Judaism of the Second Temple, on the function of the Law and its connection to the Covenant, for the Jews of the time but also for the Apostle, etc., — that are quite varied as well as incompatible. Maschmeier presents how he himself sees Paul's position: (i) on the Torah, which was given for the good of humanity and could be observed<sup>8</sup>, but because it is exterior to mankind and not inscribed on the heart was not able, unlike the Spirit, to give mankind the power to obey<sup>9</sup>; (ii) on God, who does not save according to the observance of the Law but in spite of its non-observance; (iii) on the situation of the believers justified in Christ, capable henceforth of doing good<sup>10</sup>, believers from Jewish origins or not and who form "the eschatological people of God"<sup>11</sup>.

Other studies that could have been mentioned would only confirm the diagnosis stated above, namely, the indeterminate number of interpretations. Rather than cite

<sup>6</sup> Cf., for ex., R. Penna and J.N. Aletti.

<sup>7</sup> J.C. MASCHMEIER, *Rechtfertigung bei Paulus*. Eine Kritik alter und neuer Paulusperspektiven (BWANT 189; Stuttgart 2010) 93-98. The author notes quite rightly that, according to the reading that Catholic exegetes make of the Pauline letters, justification renders believers capable of doing good.

<sup>8</sup> For Maschmeier, the fact that it had not actually been obeyed does not imply that it could not be.

<sup>9</sup> He makes no distinction between the Law and the written code, the γράμμα (2Cor 3). He interprets the adage in 2Cor 3:6 "the written code kills" (RSV) based on Rom 7:11: it is not the Law that kills but Sin that utilizes the Law for its deadly purposes. Cf. MASCHMEIER, *Rechtfertigung bei Paulus*, 144-145.

<sup>10</sup> Against those who reject all synergy for justified believers; MASCHMEIER, *Rechtfertigung bei Paulus*, 115, F. Hahn, G. Strecker, I.H. Marshall are mentioned.

<sup>11</sup> Maschmeier several times repeats the expression "das eschatologische Gottesvolk" (in particular on p. 169 and following). As I have shown in my essay on Pauline ecclesiology, Paul carefully avoids using such an expression, and if one wants to reflect upon the ecclesial effects of justification, one must follow Paul's example. Cf. J.N. ALETTI, *Essai sur l'ecclésiologie des lettres de Saint Paul* (EB NS 60; Paris 2009).

each and every opinion, it seems more reasonable for us to confront the most well-known or most emblematic representatives of the different perspectives and readings.

Because one encounters the doctrine in only two letters, Galatians and Romans, its development can hardly be perceived chronologically even if one can correctly assert that Galatians preceded Romans. However, it will be interesting to see which components of justification each of the letters do highlight, to examine the proofs furnished in order to determine their nature and function and to see if they are the same everywhere.

### 3. Preliminary Methodological Observations<sup>12</sup>

Because Paul never wrote a treatise on justification, it is important that his thoughts on the topic not be understood as if they were part of a closed system. However, their pastoral purpose is always to uphold the uncircumcision of believers coming from the Gentile world, that is, non-Jews. Furthermore, his thoughts are less occasional and contingent than is often said because Paul usually distances himself from concrete and urgent difficulties in order to present his position. Nonetheless, one can ascertain an actual progression in his thought from Galatians to Romans, the latter furnishing more linear and comprehensive developments.

If the statements of Galatians and Romans on justification are very close and are considered by all exegetes as being typically Pauline, are those of 1Cor 1:30; 4:4 and 6:11 traditional, 1Cor utilizing vocables that relate to justification but that do not have as an ecclesial background the question of the circumcision of Christians coming from the Gentile world? Thus, the inquiry must begin with linguistics.

Today, in order to avoid any anachronism, more and more historians who specialize in the origins of Christianity and the Judaism of the Second Temple prefer to speak of Judeans rather than Jews and of Christ believers rather than Christians. Without denying the value of these distinctions, more important than they might seem, this essay will utilize the old appellations Jews and Christians, which have the advantage of avoiding circumlocutions.

### 4. The Route

As has just been said, the linguistic analysis will constitute a necessary preamble: what meaning does Paul give to the vocables *δικαιόω* and *δικαιοσύνη*? One will next examine the possible development and coherence of the Pauline positions, from the first in Corinthians to Romans, by following the respective argumenta-

<sup>12</sup> See, for ex., those of D. MARGUERAT, "L'Évangile paulinien de la justification par la foi", *Paul et l'unité des chrétiens* (ed. J. SCHLOSSER) (Colloquium Oecumenicum Paulinum 19; Leuven 2010) 33-39.

tions, especially that of Galatians, which is more concise and more difficult. Thus, one will be able to determine if it is the differences or the similarities that prevail.

Along the way, several questions will be asked of the texts. Why does juridical vocabulary have such importance in Galatians and Romans? Why and how has Paul combined faith, justification and works of the Law? Is there an essential link between the doctrine of justification and the *theologia crucis*? And as for the status of the believer, can one uphold the formula *simul justus et peccator* that has become classic? Justified, does the believer remain a sinner, and is he only able to address Christ by saying to him: "Lord Jesus, you are my justice, but I, I am your sin"<sup>13</sup>? Finally, does justification have an ecclesial dimension: is the Church the place of justification, the institution of salvation or not<sup>14</sup>?

The following stage will be more synchronic and will reflect upon the role of the doctrine of justification in Pauline theology: does it have an essential role and up to what point? It will be necessary as well to compare Paul's positions in Gal/Rom with that of Jam 2:14-26 and to see why the other writings of the New Testament have not tackled the theme of justification head on. Thus, we will be led to ask ourselves if the Pauline doctrine of justification by faith alone still remains theologically pertinent today. One will most likely respond that it must be so since the Lutheran and Catholic confessions have recently arrived at an agreement in which they declare that the doctrine of justification by faith alone expresses the heart of the Gospel:

We share the conviction that the message of justification directs us in a special way towards the heart of the New Testament witness to God's saving action in Christ: it tells us that as sinners our new life is solely due to the forgiving and renewing mercy that God imparts as a gift and we receive in faith, and never can merit in any way<sup>15</sup>.

The paragraph that follows goes as far as to establish that the doctrine of justification must serve as the criterion for the doctrine and the *praxis* of our Churches:

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<sup>13</sup> In German: "Du, Herr Jesus, bist meine Gerechtigkeit, ich aber bin deine Sünde". Letter of 1516 to Spenlein. Note that Luther is not denying that sanctification results from justification: if justification remains for him forensic, sanctification is internal — he distinguishes between the two.

<sup>14</sup> B. SESBOÜÉ, *Sauvés par la grâce. Les débats sur la justification du XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle à nos jours* (Paris 2009) 44: "One thus sees the difference between the ecclesial schema of Luther and that of the Catholic Church. For the first, the movement goes from the person of Christ to the Christian existence of the justified and from there to the assembly of justified believers. The Church is thus not an institution of salvation. For Catholicism, Christ founded his Church in which the baptized believers lead a Christian existence".

<sup>15</sup> *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification*, § 17.

Therefore the doctrine of justification, which takes up this message [that of §17, cited above] and explicates it, is more than just one part of Christian doctrine. It stands in an essential relation to all truths of faith, which are to be seen as internally related to each other. It is an indispensable criterion which constantly serves to orient all the teaching and practice of our churches to Christ<sup>16</sup>.

Without denying the value of this historic agreement, the exegete must make his own way and see if Pauline thought corresponds to how it has been interpreted over the course of time. Necessary and freeing work, let us hope!

## 5. The Essay's Background

For more than 20 years, I have envisioned the writing and publication of this essay on justification in the Pauline letters. Beginning in the 1990s, the books and articles that I wrote have progressively established its literary, rhetorical, semantic and theological bases; this explains why I have repeated several of these previous studies with modifications, complements and, above all, reorientations. Here, the reader who has read my previous essays and articles will find the major outlines of the argumentations with regard to Gal 1-2, Gal 3, Rom 4 and Phil 3. When the exegesis of Paul's argumentations has been made in a previous article or monograph, I have not repeated it in detail and have instead concentrated on the question of justification. The reader who would like to know more about my positions concerning the intricate exegetical questions raised by the passages that are presented can consult the monographs and articles mentioned in the notes at the bottom of the page and in the final bibliography<sup>17</sup>.

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<sup>16</sup> *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification*, § 18.

<sup>17</sup> In the pages that follow, the Greek and Latin Fathers of the Church will, of course, be mentioned, but one will not follow in a systematic way how they read the Pauline texts on justification, an undertaking that would become gigantic. On this subject, one can consult the work that has become a classic, J. GROSS, *La divinisation du chrétien d'après les Pères grecs. Contribution historique à la doctrine de la grâce* (Paris 1938), translated into English by P. ONICA, *The Divinization of the Christian According to the Greek Fathers* (Anaheim, CA 2002).





## CHAPTER I

### Towards a Preliminary Definition of Justification

After having listed words from the judicial field in the letters of Paul, in particular those denoting justification, one will begin with some of the divergent interpretations that have been made by contemporary exegesis and end with a preliminary definition of justification based on some of the particularities of the Pauline usage.

#### 1. The Judicial Vocabulary

Assertions concerning divine justice and human justice/injustice are found in all the Pauline letters in quite a large number (more than 150x) using different vocables (substantives, verbs, adjectives and adverbs).

##### *Substantives*

- righteousness (δικαιοσύνη) 58x (Rom 1:17; 3:5, 21, 22, 25, 26; 4:3, 5, 6, 9, 11 [2x], 13, 22; 5:17, 21; 6:13, 16, 18, 19, 20; 8:10; 9:30 [3x], 31; 10:3 [3x], 4, 5, 6, 10; 14:17; 1Cor 1:30; 2Cor 3:9; 5:21; 6:7, 14; 9:9, 10; 11:15; Gal 2:21; 3:6, 21; 5:5; Eph 4:24; 5:9; 6:14; Phil 1:11; 3:6, 9 [2x]; 1Tm 6:11; 2Tm 2:22; 3:16; 4:8; Titus 3:5)
- wickedness (ἀδικία) 12x (Rom 1:18 [2x], 29; 2:8; 3:5; 6:13; 9:14; 1Cor 13:6; 2Cor 12:13; 2Th 2:10, 12; 2Tm 2:19)
- just requirement (δικαίωμα) 5x (Rom 1:32; 2:26; 5:16, 18; 8:4)
- justification (δικαίωσις) 2x (Rom 4:25; 5:18)
- vengeance (ἐκδίκησις) 3x (Rom 12:19; 2Cor 7:11; 2Th 1:8)
- punishment (δίκη) 1x (2Th 1:9)
- righteous judgment (δικαιοκρισία) 1x (Rom 2:5)

##### *Verbs*

- justify (δικαιόω) 27x (Rom 2:13; 3:4, 20, 24, 26, 28, 30; 4:2, 5; 5:1, 9; 6:7; 8:30 [2x], 33; 1Cor 4:4; 6:11; Gal 2:16 [3x], 17; 3:8, 11, 24; 5:4; 1Tm 3:16; Titus 3:7)
- do wrong (ἀδικέω) 9x (1Cor 6:7, 8; 2Cor 7:2, 12 [2x]; Gal 4:12; Col 3:25 [2x]; Phlm 18)
- avenge (ἐκδικέω) 2x (Rom 12:19; 2Cor 10:6)

*Adjectives*

- righteous (δίκαιος) 17x (Rom 1:17; 2:13; 3:10, 26; 5:7, 19; 7:12; Gal 3:11; Eph 6:11; Phil 1:7; 4:8; Col 4:1; 2Th 1:5, 6; 1Tm 1:9; 2Tm 4:8; Titus 1:8)
- avenging (ἐκδικος) 2x (Rom 13:4; 1Th 4:6)
- just (ἐνδικος) 1x (Rom 3:8)

*Adverbs*

- justly (δικαίως) 3x (1Cor 15:34; 1Th 2:10; Titus 2:12)

Identifying the vocables from the root δικ- is not sufficient<sup>1</sup>. It is also necessary to take into account the entire judicial field, that is, words such as νόμος, βῆμα, κριτής/κρίνειν, ἐγκαλεῖν, παρακαλεῖν, κατακρίνειν, ἀπόδωσις/ἀποδίδωμι, etc., words that one encounters especially in Galatians and Romans. Furthermore, it will be important to determine why judicial vocabulary is as present as it is in these two letters.

## 2. The Vocabulary of Justification

The vocabulary of justification is part of the judicial field and raises a specific difficulty, as was noted by a French linguist several decades ago<sup>2</sup>, a difficulty that it is advisable to tackle before launching into the exegesis of the Pauline passages in which the subject of justification is treated. It is indeed accepted by almost all commentators on the Pauline letters that the verb δικαιοῦν is declarative and means “to declare just”, without the declared person necessarily being so. A judge can discharge a criminal and declare him not guilty in error. But if δικαιοῦν has only a declarative value and does not imply a change implemented in such a way that the person declared not guilty is actually so, this could mean either that the justification is purely forensic and does not cause someone to pass from the state of being unjust to that of being just or that the interior transformation has already been implemented and that δικαιοῦν has a simple constative value: a person previously delivered from his malice and sin would then be declared just<sup>3</sup>. But in precisely what way?

The verb δικαιοῦν is part of the denominatives<sup>4</sup> ending in -όω, the meaning of which is in general factitive, “with some nuances due to the nature of the stem”<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> The verb δικάζω is not utilized in the NT.

<sup>2</sup> G. RONNET, “La curieuse histoire du verbe ‘dikaion’ d’Eschyle à Saint Paul”, *Revue de Philologie, de Littérature et d’Histoire anciennes* 59 (1985) 221-234.

<sup>3</sup> Such is, for example, the position of N.T. Wright to which we will return later.

<sup>4</sup> A verb is denominative when its origin is from a noun (or from an adjective). Conversely, a noun is deverbal (deverbative) when it originates from a verb.

<sup>5</sup> RONNET, “La curieuse histoire du verbe ‘dikaion’”, 221.

“If it is a substantive, the denominative indicates the object’s coming into contact with what is signified by the stem: thus *θανατοῦν* ‘to put to death’, *στεφανοῦν* ‘to crown’ [...]”<sup>6</sup>. The meaning is more clearly factitive when the stem is an adjective. “It is then a question of a quality that the object of the verb did not possess and that is conferred upon it; thus, there is a transformation: a man was a slave, one frees him (*ἐλευθεροῦν*), another was free, one enslaves him (*δουλοῦν*)”<sup>7</sup>. Formed from the adjective *δίκαιος*, *δικαιοῦν* belongs to this group. But in the classics, its factitive meaning is negative<sup>8</sup> and nearly nonexistent; it is almost always followed by an infinitive and has a declarative meaning that virtually makes it the equivalent of the verb *ἀξιοῦν*<sup>9</sup>: ‘to reckon just’, ‘to reckon worthy’, or according to the context ‘to be reckoned in the right’<sup>10</sup>. By the 4<sup>th</sup> century B.C., the verb *δικαιοῦν* had practically disappeared from Attic prose<sup>11</sup>, but it is often encountered in Philo followed by an infinitive, as in the classics. This verb, which had almost never been used since the 4<sup>th</sup> century, reoccurs in the LXX but with a new construction: “Having translated the Hebrew *qdq*, ‘to declare just’, the translators have recourse to the denominative of *δίκαιος*, to which they give a meaning that it had never had. They construct it solely with a personal object, which allows for the frequent use of the passive, for which they create forms up to then not in use: perfect *δεδικαίωται*, future *δικαιωθήσεται*. It is necessary to note that the meaning is never factitive in the strictest sense; it is not a question of ‘making just’ whoever is not but of recognizing (or not) a preexisting quality (or not)”<sup>12</sup>. And the same author concludes: “With nuances that depend upon the context, *δικαιοῦν* is employed by the LXX with a meaning that is the exact opposite of that given to it by Herodotus (later imitated by Dion Cassius) when he constructs it with a personal object: *ὁ δικαίωσας με* ‘who declares me just’ would be in his works ‘who punishes me’. Such a contrast seems to indicate that the authors of the translation did not know this meaning of

<sup>6</sup> RONNET, “La curieuse histoire du verbe ‘dikaion’”, 221. Also see *λυτρόω* (release on receipt of a ransom), from *λύτρον*, *ὑψόω* (raise up), from *ὑψος*, *ὑπνώω* (put to sleep), from *ὑπνος*, etc.

<sup>7</sup> RONNET, “La curieuse histoire du verbe ‘dikaion’”, 221. Cf. *κενέω* (empty), from *κενός*, *ταπεινώω* (lower), from *ταπεινός*, *κακόω* (maltreat), from *κακός*, etc.

<sup>8</sup> In relation to *Dikē*, in the passive, for ex., *δικαιωθείς*, ‘struck by *Dikē*’. (AESCHYLUS, *Agamemnon*, 393), in other words chastised, punished; in the active, in HERODOTUS, *Historiae*, V.92b.13, *Λάβδα...δικαιώσει Κόρινθον* (‘Labda...will punish Corinth’).

<sup>9</sup> Like *δικαιοῦν*, this verb’s stem is also from an adjectival base (*ἄξιος*) but does not have a factitive usage (‘to render dignified’), only declarative (‘to judge dignified’).

<sup>10</sup> Cf., for ex., HERODOTUS, *Historiae*, II.151.14: *κτεῖναι [μέν] οὐκ ἐδικαίωσαν Ψαμμήτικον*. See also *Historiae*, II.181.2: *ἐδικαίωσε δὲ καὶ γῆμαι αὐτόθεν*, etc.

<sup>11</sup> According to RONNET, “La curieuse histoire du verbe ‘dikaion’”, 227, “this rejection of *δικαιοῦν* by Attic Greek seems to be explained by the concurrence of *ἀξιοῦν*”.

<sup>12</sup> RONNET, “La curieuse histoire du verbe ‘dikaion’”, 228.

the verb nor the classic use that one finds in Philo. One is able to note that although the author of the book of Wisdom, who wrote directly in Greek, employed the adjective extensively, he never utilized the denominative, which would reinforce the hypothesis that it was not in use in the everyday language of Alexandria<sup>13</sup>.

So what then is the usage of *δικαιοῦν* in the New Testament? This verb does not appear in 1–2 Peter<sup>14</sup>, Jude, Mark, John, 2 Corinthians, 1–2 Thessalonians, Philippians, Colossians, Ephesians, Philemon, 2 Timothy, Hebrews, and very little in Luke (5x), James (3x), Matthew (2x), Acts (2x)<sup>15</sup>, 1 Corinthians (2x), 1 Timothy (1x) and Titus (1x). Mat 11:19 and 12:37 repeat the usage of the LXX<sup>16</sup>. It is more or less the same for the five times that the verb is used in Luke<sup>17</sup>.

We will treat the uses in James in the chapter that is devoted to it. And the following can be said about those of 1Cor 4:4; 6:11; 1Tm 3:16 and Titus 3:7, with the latter two letters probably being pseudepigrapha. The οὐ δεδικαίωμαι of 1Cor 4:4 recalls the usage of the LXX. It is the same for the ἐδικαίωθη of 1Tm 3:16 that recalls, as does Rom 3:4, the passages in which the verb is speaking of God, as in Ps 50:6 LXX. Only 1Cor 6:11 and Titus 3:7, in which the passive of *δικαιοῦν* is positive, correspond to the way in which Galatians and Romans utilize the verb<sup>18</sup>, which is what it is now necessary to examine, without forgetting our question: are the uses of *δικαιοῦν* in Galatians and Romans factitive or declarative?

### 3. Justification in Galatians and Romans

Commentators frequently note that the verb *δικαιοῦν* appears in these two letters more than 20 times; the substantive *δικαίωσις*, however, is utilized only twice in the New Testament in Rom 4:25 and 5:18<sup>19</sup>.

<sup>13</sup> RONNET, "La curieuse histoire du verbe 'dikaion' ", 229-230.

<sup>14</sup> Note in 2Peter 1:13 a formulation analogous to that of the classics: *δίκαιον ἡγοῦμαι*.

<sup>15</sup> In Acts 13:38,39, the formulation is close to those of Galatians and Romans, the author of the Book of Acts thus wanting the discourse that he borrows from Paul to be consistent with the doctrine stated in these two letters.

<sup>16</sup> Mat 11:19: wisdom "is justified (ἐδικαίωθη) by her deeds"; Mat 12:37: "by your words you will be recognized as righteous" (δικαιωθήσῃ).

<sup>17</sup> In Luke 7:29, 35, it is a question of the recognition of divine justice (Luke 7:35 is parallel to Mat 11:19); as for the formulation in Luke 10:29 and 16:15, it corresponds to the middle voice of Sir 7:5. For the perfect participle of Luke 18:14, see Ps 18:10 LXX.

<sup>18</sup> Paul utilizes *δικαιοῦν* positively, except in Gal 2:16 and Rom 3:20 which are repeating Ps 142:2 LXX.

<sup>19</sup> And only once in the OT, in Lev 24:22, in which it has a meaning different from in Paul.

*The verb δικαιόω*

Rom 2:13; (3:4); 3:20, 24, 26, 28, 30; 4:2, 5; 5:1, 9; 6:7; 8:30 [2x], 33; Gal 2:16 [3x], 17; 3:8, 11, 24; 5:4

*The substantive δικαίωσις*

Rom 4:25; 5:18

Let us note, along with commentators, that when the verb is used in the active, God is its only subject and that the passive uses are almost all theological, with God being the complement of the implicit agent. As for the object of the verb utilized in the active, it is always the man who believes, whether he is Jew or Greek (cf. Rom 3:30). In short, it is in these passages that the components of justification are mentioned: its origin, its recipients, its conditions, its modalities and ways of realization, and lastly its purpose. The work of the exegete is thus to see why and how this subject is developed in these two letters — but not in all their sections — and to determine its importance for Pauline theology.

Beginning with the *New Perspective on Paul*, the study of justification in Paul was accompanied by that of election and covenant. The publications of N.T. Wright are typical of this development because they repeat that to be justified is the equivalent of being a member of the people of God: “Justification, for Paul, is a subset of election, that is, it belongs as a part of his doctrine of the people of God”<sup>20</sup>. In other words, being a member of the people of God or a member of the covenant is equivalent to being justified: “Those who hear the gospel and respond to it in faith are then declared by God to be his people... They are given the status *dikaïos*, ‘righteous’, ‘within the covenant’”<sup>21</sup>. Or still: “‘Justification’ in the first century was not about how someone might establish a relationship with God. It was about God’s eschatological definition, both future and present, of who was, in fact, a member of his people”<sup>22</sup>.

Such assertions have provoked a lively debate, as confirmed by the essay of J. Piper, which is presented as a long response to Wright’s positions<sup>23</sup>. “Wright’s way of speaking about justification will be virtually unintelligible to the average person in the pew as he or she tries to conceive how the word *justify* corresponds to family membership. They can certainly grasp that the justified sinner is also in the family and that only justified sinners are in the family, and that being in the family is an

<sup>20</sup> N.T. WRIGHT, *Paul in Fresh Perspective* (Minneapolis, MN 2005) 121.

<sup>21</sup> WRIGHT, *Paul in Fresh Perspective*, 122.

<sup>22</sup> N.T. WRIGHT, *What Saint Paul Really Said* (Minneapolis, MN 2005) 119.

<sup>23</sup> J. PIPER, *The Future of Justification. A Response to N.T. Wright* (Wheaton, IL 2007) 40.

implication of being justified. But to say that justification was about who was a member of God's family is going to mislead. It will obscure the denotative meaning of the word *justify* by calling one of its attendant implications a denotative meaning".

Before asking if certain semantic fields in Paul — covenant, people, Gospel — are or are not in an essential relationship with that of justification, it is important to inquire into the type of relationship described and/or implied by the vocabulary of justification.

#### 4. Towards a Preliminary Definition of Justification in Paul

##### 4.1. *The Problem*

Traditionally, justification according to Paul is interpreted as the divine reaction by which an impious person becomes just thanks to his faith. Justification has God as the operator and the believer as the recipient. But because the verb *δικαίωω* is able to be either factitive (to make just), like other verbs ending in *-όω*, or declarative ('to declare just'), the interpretation changes according to the value that one gives to it. And with the declarative meaning, justification can be seen as a declaration that does not change the recipient, who, even if he is declared just, remains, nevertheless, a sinner (cf. Luther's famous formula *simul justus et peccator*) or as a declaration confirming the prior salvific work and the gathering of the believer into the people of God — this being the meaning preferred by N.T. Wright.

According to N.T. Wright, Paul uses 'vindication' language, i.e., the *δικαίωω* word-group, when he is describing not the moment when or the process by which someone comes from idolatry, sin and death to God, Christ and life but rather the verdict that God pronounces subsequent to that event. Wright repeatedly emphasizes two points.

##### a. Justification is not a part of the Gospel

The word *dikaioō* [justify] is, after all, a declarative word, declaring that something is the case, rather than a word for making something happen or changing the way something is<sup>24</sup>. I must stress again that the doctrine of justification by faith is not what Paul means by 'the gospel'<sup>25</sup>.

We are not justified by faith by believing in justification by faith. We are justified by faith by believing in the gospel itself — in other words, that Jesus is Lord and that God raised him from the dead<sup>26</sup>.

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<sup>24</sup> N.T. WRIGHT, "New Perspectives on Paul", *Justification in Perspective*. Historical Developments and Contemporary Challenges (ed. B.L. McCORMACK) (Grand Rapids, MI 2006) 258.

<sup>25</sup> WRIGHT, *What Saint Paul Really Said*, 132.

<sup>26</sup> WRIGHT, "New Perspectives on Paul", 261.



## b. Justification is a declaration of belonging to the people of God

‘Justification’ in the first century was not about how someone might establish a relationship with God. It was about God’s eschatological definition, both future and present, of who was, in fact, a member of his people<sup>27</sup>.

[Justification] was not so much about ‘getting in’, or indeed about ‘staying in’, as about ‘how you tell who was in’. In standard Christian theological language, it wasn’t so much about soteriology as about ecclesiology; not so much about salvation as about the church<sup>28</sup>.

The word ‘justification’, despite centuries of Christian misuse, is used by Paul to denote that which happens immediately after the ‘call’: ‘those God called, he also justified’ (Romans 8:30). In other words, those who hear the gospel and respond to it in faith are then declared by God to be his people, his elect, ‘the circumcision’, ‘the Jews’, ‘the Israel of God’. They are given the status δίκαιος, ‘righteous’, ‘within the covenant’<sup>29</sup>.

Wright’s descriptions of justification are summarized thus by J. Piper: “This counting as righteous — this justification — is not the event by which a person moves from unbelief to faith. It is the divine act without which a person cannot be a member of God’s family [...] The act of justification has no part in determining or constituting that new relationship with God”<sup>30</sup>.

Although the positions of Wright and Piper are not compatible, they are beneficial in showing that we are still far from any sort of unanimity. And since here we have not undertaken a *status quaestionis*, we will not be criticizing either position. We will, however, progressively show how some positions that are still relentlessly defended are quite simply untenable and that others constitute the basis of a new paradigm and must be promoted.

## 4.2. A Critical Examination

Because this chapter is above all linguistic, some brief observations — that will be taken up and amplified over the course of the next chapters — will permit clearing the ground without having to take a position on the subject.

As our brief linguistic inquiry has demonstrated, at the time of the New Testament, it does not seem possible to exclude the declarative meaning of δικαιούν from the linguistic landscape and thus from the Pauline letters. But does this mean that the factitive meaning must be excluded?

<sup>27</sup> WRIGHT, *What Saint Paul Really Said*, 119.

<sup>28</sup> WRIGHT, *What Saint Paul Really Said*, 119.

<sup>29</sup> WRIGHT, *Paul in Fresh Perspective*, 122.

<sup>30</sup> PIPER, *The Future of Justification*, 42.

First of all, let us recognize that the declarative meaning of δικαιῶν is confirmed by the equivalent formulation in Rom 4:3 and 4:5, 6, λογίζεσθαι [εἰς] δικαιοσύνην ('to reckon [as] righteousness'), an expression that Paul repeats verbatim from the Greek version of the Scriptures (in Gen 15:6). One may be surprised that Paul has not cited a scriptural passage in which the verb δικαιῶν is used in the factitive sense, but as he wanted to show that justification was not linked to the Law and was prior to it and that, to do this, only Gen 15:6 was at his disposal, he had to be content with the expression λογίζεσθαι εἰς δικαιοσύνην. But before showing that Paul gives a factitive meaning to this expression and to the verb δικαιῶν that he makes its equivalent, let us see why the meaning of the verb cannot be essentially (and only) declarative.

(1) For N.T. Wright, justification has not changed the relationship with God — it is thus not a salvific act — it only confirms the salvific act and thus is a subsequent declaration. But Rom 5:1 makes peace with God the direct effect of justification, which must thus be a salvific act: justification is what has truly changed the relationship between God and us; thus, the participle δικαιωθέντες must have a factitive meaning. It is the same in Rom 5:9: the phrase 'justified by his blood', clearly indicates that the blood of Christ is the instrumental cause of justification and that as a consequence the latter is effected and not just declared or pronounced by God. Rom 3:24 also confirms the factitive meaning of the verb. Thus, it seems difficult to accept that for Paul justification is solely declarative.

(2) As the definitions cited above have shown, for N.T. Wright, justification is a statement by which God declares believers to be members of His people. But for Paul, being-a-member-of-the-people-of-God could not be an essential component of justification because it could not be applied to Abraham, who is, however, the model of the justified man: in fact, the Patriarch is unique, the head of a family but not of a people. In Gen 15 God does not say to Abraham that he will be a great people (λαός) or a great nation (ἔθνος) but only announces to him that he will have numerous descendants (σπέρμα). Thus for Abraham, belonging to a people constitutes neither the essence nor the horizon of justification, and as his justification is the model of ours, it must be the same for us who are his descendants.

(3) Throughout his letters, Paul never associates justification with covenant (διαθήκη) or with people (λαός) but always with descendants, filiation, and heritage, in other words, with familial vocabulary.

(4) One ought not to define justification in Paul without seeing why and how he has utilized the vocables designating it. And it is the dispute over the circumcision of ethnic Christians that is the ecclesial context of his statements. For in fact, certain Judaizers wanted ethnic Christians to be circumcised in order to have access to the promises made to Abraham. But for Paul, once circumcised, these

believers would become subjects of the Law and thus Ἰουδαῖοι, which would imply a faithful obedience to all the commandments, an obedience necessary for becoming just in the eyes of God. Justification would then be attained by doing the works required by the Law. But for Paul, to impose circumcision on the ethnic Christians was contrary to the Gospel. That is why he was forced to show that their justification came by faith alone, without their having to become subjects of the Law, that is, members of the Jewish people. In short, justification as Paul sees it could not consist of a declaration of belonging to the people of the covenant, who are the people of God.

### Conclusions

Let us summarize the provisional results to which this brief linguistic inquiry has led us. When discussing the Pauline doctrine of justification, one cannot keep quiet about the ecclesial circumstances that occasioned it. What is more, one cannot deny that the Pauline letters give a factitive meaning to the verb δικαιοῦν, which designates the divine operation that causes the passage from the state of enmity to that of righteousness.

An inquiry into the usage of the verb δικαιοῦν is, nevertheless, insufficient. It is only in its literary context, in particular in its relationship to the vocabulary of faith, that the full theological significance of justification is realized. Indeed, one cannot inquire into the purport of justification without at the same time determining the meaning of the vocables πιστεῦν, πίστις, etc., in the Pauline letters. Let us add that, if the study of *language* — in other words, the vocables — is necessary, it must go hand in hand with that of Pauline *language*, by which he expresses his thought. Thus, what remains is to read the different passages in which Paul expounds his ideas on justification, in their chronological order, in order then to attempt a presentation that synthesizes our results.

The first meaning is obvious in Josephus, *Antiquitates*, XVII, 206, in which οἱ τῶν ἐπὶ καθαίρεισαι ἀετοῦ δεδικαιωμένων must be translated “those who had been condemned for pulling down the golden eagle”. So, one could read 1Cor 4:4 “I am not condemned thereby”. The second meaning, on the other hand, is encountered in Philo, *De mutatione*, I, 136, which is in fact citing Gen 38:26 in this way: “She [Tamar] is righteous” or “She has spoken justly”<sup>3</sup>.

In 1Cor 4:4, the grammatical and semantic context invites giving a positive meaning to the verb, ‘to acquit’, ‘to declare righteous’, or even ‘to be righteous’. Indeed, the proposition in which the passive perfect δεδικαίωμαι is found is in contrast to what precedes it, as the adversative conjunction ἀλλά indicates: Paul has nothing for which to reproach himself — one will note the formulation, similar to Job 27:6<sup>4</sup> —, *but* this does not thereby render him so in the eyes of God, which explains the addition of a third proposition by which he submits himself to the judgment of his Lord. The use of the passive perfect undoubtedly denotes an influence from the LXX. This being said, as commentators note, the verb is not referring to the doctrine of the justification of sinners.

Is it the same in 1Cor 6:9-11?

## 1.2. 1Cor 6:11<sup>5</sup>

But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified (ἐδικαιώθητε) in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in (ἐν) the Spirit of our God. (RSV)

But now you have been washed, you have been sanctified, you have been justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by (ἐν) the Spirit of our God<sup>6</sup>.

The placement of the passive aorist ἐδικαιώθητε at the end of a series after a middle aorist (ἀπελούσασθε, ‘you washed yourselves’) and a passive aorist (ἡγιάσθητε, ‘you were sanctified’)<sup>7</sup> clearly shows that its denotation is positive and is in no way negative — to condemn, to punish: purification, sanctification and justification go together and are in opposition to the previous series comprised of vocables with a negative denotation:

<sup>3</sup> Trans. C.D. Yonge.

<sup>4</sup> Οὐ γὰρ σύνοιδα ἑμαυτῷ ἄτοπα πράξας.

<sup>5</sup> In Greek: ἀλλὰ ἀπελούσασθε, ἀλλὰ ἡγιάσθητε, ἀλλὰ ἐδικαιώθητε ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι τοῦ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ καὶ ἐν τῷ πνεύματι τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν.

<sup>6</sup> FITZMYER, *First Corinthians*, 248.

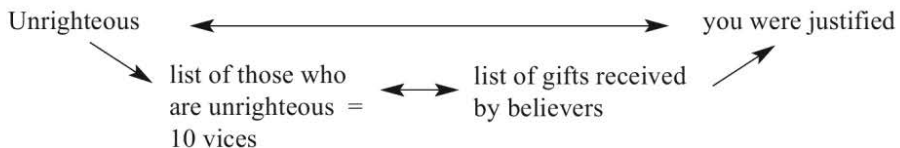
<sup>7</sup> For ἀπελούσασθε, it would be necessary to translate it with “you washed yourselves” as in Acts 22:16. These are the only occurrences of the verb in the NT.

vv. 9-10	negative series	the unrighteous	unrighteous, immoral, idolaters, adulterers, sexual pervers, thieves, greedy, drunkards, revilers, robbers
v. 11	positive series	you, justified	washed, sanctified, justified

It is easy to determine the respective function of the first two indicative aorists. The first denotes purification; but the cleansing is not sufficient because once it has occurred, as with a room that is completely clean but empty, it is necessary to refill it with a new spirit, which is what the second aorist denotes: sanctification is positive and designates the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. One could simplistically paraphrase these first two verbs by saying that the first describes an operation of draining, and the second, of filling. According to commentators, both are referring to Baptism<sup>8</sup>. So why add the third? In order to respond, it is important to take a quick look at the arrangement of the passage because it is by taking the rhetorical unit as a whole that one is able to identify the respective function of the different vocables.

### 1.2.1. The Arrangement of the Rhetorical Micro-Unit

As the preceding table shows, 1Cor 6:9-11 is a rhetorical micro-unit constructed from an opposition. As for the argumentation's progression, it is obvious enough. Indeed, v. 9a is a general declaration — on the unrighteous — that is illustrated by the list of the bearers of vices in vv. 9b-10: the unrighteous in v. 9a are those designated in vv. 9b-10. And to this group, whose situation is negative, v. 11 contrasts the group of the baptized, whose situation has become positive and must remain so. Furthermore, each part of this binary arrangement is summarized by a term referring to righteousness: the adjective ἄδικοι announces the list in vv. 9b-10, which specifies the meaning by designation; and the verb ἐδικαιώθητε, the counterpoint of the initial ἄδικοι, concludes the positive list in v. 11:



<sup>8</sup> Which is the case of the verb ἀπολούω in Acts 22:16. For 1Cor 6:11, see, for ex., FITZMYER, *First Corinthians*, 258: "Three effects of the Christ-event are singled out: 'washed', referring to baptism, the Christian rite by which the sinful status of the vices mentioned in vv. 9-10 is washed away".

was in Christ when He reconciled the world to Himself”. But the *reversio* (in other words, the parallelism existing between *a* and *A*, then between *A* and *A'*) shows that this is not the point that Paul wants to highlight. Also according to Bell, the phrase “God was in Christ” could be alluding to the divinity of Christ because of this phrase’s meaning when it appears elsewhere. But in 2Cor 5:18-21 Paul is in no way emphasizing the divine status of Christ but only the modalities by which God effected His divine plan of salvation.

According to Porter, the phrase ἡν καταλλάσσω in v. 19 can be translated by “God was in/through Christ reconciling the world to himself”. He adds: “the periphrastic is a marked form; in other words, its use when a simple form is available draws attention to the verbal action it represents. In this context it was apparently used by Paul to draw attention to his statement regarding God’s work of reconciliation”<sup>12</sup>.

The phrase ἡν καταλλάσσω is in fact periphrastic because the imperfect of the verb καταλλάσσω would suffice to express the same aspect. This form highlights the open-ended aspect of the process; one can thus understand that this work of reconciliation has not ceased and that in the present it is still offered by the apostolic ministry of Paul. In the NT, Paul is not the only one to utilize this periphrastic form that one finds most often in the Lucan work. As has been shown, in that author’s work, it is a question of imitating the LXX, in other words, a septuagintism<sup>13</sup>. Is it the same in 2Cor 5:19; Gal 1:23 (ἀκούοντες ἦσαν) and Phil 2:26 (ἐπιποθῶν ἡν), or is it necessary to see another kind of emphasis? In these three passages, the periphrastic form does not carry with it a special meaning; rather it is necessary to see in them the influence of the LXX, as in Luke.

For others, the participle καταλλάσσω functions rather as an attributive substantive, and as a consequence, in 2Cor 5:19 the temporal aspect is of no importance<sup>14</sup>. But the phrase utilized by Paul is clearly repeating a usage from the LXX, and therefore, one cannot separate the participle καταλλάσσω from the verb εἰμι that precedes it.

As for the imperative passive aorist καταλλάγητε, it means “be reconciled” now, in the present time, and so it is necessary to translate it by “let yourself be reconciled”, in the sense of “let God reconcile you with Himself”. So why does Paul uti-

<sup>12</sup> S. PORTER, *Καταλλάσσω in Ancient Greek Literature, with Reference to the Pauline Writings* (Estudios de Filologia Neotestamentaria 5; Córdoba 1994) 137.

<sup>13</sup> A. VERBOOMEN, *L'imparfait périphrastique dans l'œuvre de Luc et dans la Septante*. Contribution à l'étude du système verbal du grec néotestamentaire (Académie Royale de Belgique. Classe des Lettres 010; Lovanii 1992). One encounters this periphrastic form more than 200x in the LXX.

<sup>14</sup> M. LANG, “Erwägung zu 2Kor 5,19a”, *BibNotiz* 84 (1996) 46-50.



The adjective ‘unrighteous’ receives its meaning from the first series, and the verb ‘were justified’ receives its meaning from the two aorists that precede it. The opposition of ἄδικοι with ἐδικαιώθητε along with the two series show that justification is not only declarative but also descriptive of an operation that causes the passing from one status to another, from being unrighteous to its opposite.

Moreover, one must not be surprised to see the passage end with the verb δικαιοῦν, which has a judiciary denotation, because in 1Cor 6:1-11 it is a matter of tribunals and of justice, and in these verses, the Apostle is criticizing the Corinthians who settle their disagreements before pagan tribunals. The aorist ἐδικαιώθητε summarizes the argumentation very well: rendered righteous by God, the believers must not have disagreements among themselves; what is more, they must not go before a pagan justice system incapable of recognizing their being justified, *a fortiori* to judge believers no longer dependent on ordinary human justice.

### 1.2.2. The Components of Justification

From the context, one can thus highlight some of the components of justification. First of all, it is necessary in order to inherit the *basileia theou* (v. 10b); the passive clearly indicates that God is its operator: although human judges are only able to ascertain or declare not guilty persons who are or have the appearance of being so, God alone is able to render righteous those who are not. Effected by God, justification causes those who were unrighteous (ἄδικοι) to become righteous, and if Paul uses an adjective and a substantive, and not a verb, to speak about the unrighteous person, it is in order to emphasize a status, in other words, the state of the unrighteous person. Lastly, proceeding by accumulation, “but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified”, Paul implies that justification is not just forensic and declarative but that it also corresponds to an internal transformation, that justification does not occur without personal purification and sanctification.

But there are other questions: why does Paul utilize the verb δικαιοῦν that has a meaning which believers from Greek culture would not be able to understand? In other words, why, in 1Cor 6:11, is the theme of justification not commented upon, indeed explained? Has Paul already spoken about it with the Corinthians? Has the letter to the Galatians already been written, and do the Corinthians already know about it? Exegetes are still not able to furnish certain and definitive answers to these questions. Nevertheless, the passage that was just briefly presented, 1Cor 6:9-11, has allowed identifying some of the components of justification.

## 2. In 2 Corinthians

In 2 Corinthians, one encounters neither the verb δικαιοῦν nor the substantive δικαιοσύνη, but there are some phrases that express the same idea, for example, when Paul says that Christ died so that we might become the ‘righteousness of God’ (2Cor 5:21), as well as the metonymy that one finds in 2Cor 6:14. Also, the idea of justification surfaces in 2Cor 3:9, as one is going to note.

### 2.1. 2Cor 5:11-21

#### 2.1.1. The Progression of the Passage

Verses 11-21 form an easily identifiable rhetorical unit in which Paul is trying to make his readers understand that the characteristics of his rhetoric are new because the situation, being new, requires that its rhetoric also be. The unit unfolds in three stages:

(i) Paul emphasizes his ἔθος and the paradoxical nature of his rhetoric:

<sup>11</sup> Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade men; but what we are is known to God, and I hope it is known also to your conscience.

<sup>12</sup> We are not commending ourselves to you again but giving you cause to be proud of us, so that you may be able to answer those who pride themselves on a man’s position and not on his heart.

<sup>13</sup> For if we are beside ourselves, it is for God; if we are in our right mind, it is for you.

(ii) The reasons for the paradox (the Christ event in the past) and the consequences for the way of seeing, thinking, speaking and being (today):

v. 14a	For the love of Christ urges us on, because we are convinced that	to know Christ	present
vv. 14b-15	one has died for all; therefore all have died. <sup>15</sup> And he died for all, that those who live might live no longer for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised.	death of Christ for all  purpose: to live for Christ	past
vv. 16-17	From now on, therefore, we regard no one from a human point of view; even though we once regarded Christ from a human point of view, we regard him thus no longer. <sup>17</sup> Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold, the new has come.	the way of knowing Christ and the world  the being in Christ = <i>new creation</i>	consequences for the present

(iii) The reasons for allowing oneself to be persuaded by Paul's discourse<sup>9</sup>:

<i>a</i> = 18a	all is from God		
<i>b</i> = 18b	who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation		
<i>A</i> = 19ab	that is, God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself	God's action	} God's action
<i>B</i> = 19c	– not counting their trespasses against them – and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation	ministry assigned	
<i>B'</i> = 20	So we are ambassadors for Christ God making his appeal through us, we beseech you on behalf of Christ be reconciled to God;	ministry performed	} Paul's exhortation
<i>A'</i> = 21	for our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God	God's action	

The passage is decisive because twice Paul refers back to the Christ event with forceful and paradoxical expressions. It is very important to note the progression that goes from the actual situation of Paul (i) and the believers (ii) to its conditions (iii).

The progression of vv. 18-21 can thus be described:

v. 18 is an introductory statement and serves as a *partitio* (*a* and *b*)  
because it is announcing the thematic elements that are going to be developed;

vv. 19-21 develop the two themes in an increasingly precise way  
by utilizing a *reversio* in *ABB'A'*.

The reader will certainly have noted the components of the *reversio*: the prepositional phrases in *a* and *A*, namely *διὰ Χριστοῦ* and *ἐν Χριστῷ* that form a polyp-toton; vv. 19-21 are divided into two parts: the divine action of reconciliation mentioned in *AB* and the apostolic exhortation in *B'A'*.

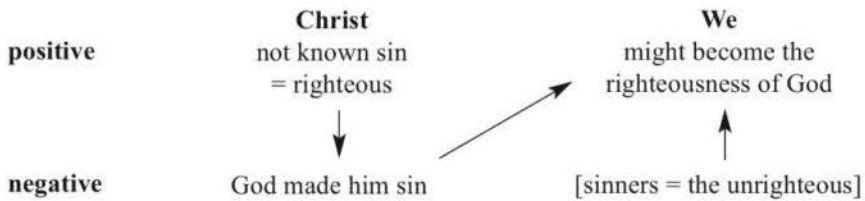
The sub-units *BB'* in which Paul mentions his apostolic ministry of reconciliation are bracketed by those (*A* and *A'*) in which the divine act of reconciliation is mentioned; the apostolic exhortation is thus presented as an effect of the divine work of reconciliation. Moreover, the contiguity of *AA'* (the divine initiative and

<sup>9</sup> Trans. RSV. The table is taken from J.N. ALETTI, "God Made Christ to Be Sin (2 Corinthians 5:21). Reflections on a Pauline Paradox", *New Approaches for Interpreting the Letters of Saint Paul*. Collected Essays. Rhetoric, Soteriology, Christology and Ecclesiology (Subsidia Biblica 43; Rome 2012) 193.

lize the passive? According to Porter, “With the passive form, God is appropriately the *goal* of the action of the verb, since he is the one to whom, through the work of Christ, one is to be reconciled”<sup>15</sup>. This explanation does not sufficiently take into account the passive form. Indeed, one must not forget the reversal of roles: the offended party, God, has taken the initiative and effected the reconciliation! Clearly, in 2Cor 5:18-21 the emphasis is placed on God’s extraordinary initiative.

(iv) Another essential component of justification mentioned in 2Cor 5:21 is the instrumental cause, in other words, Jesus Christ, as we noted above regarding the two tropes.

(v) The paradox of v. 21. The components of the paradox can be represented by the following diagram:



One also encounters this type of paradox in Gal 3:13-14. Its role is to highlight the reversal of roles indicated above. And this was possible thanks to the metonymy (*sin* and not *sinner*) without which the statement would be contradictory.

(vi) The Divine Initiative. Paul, as we have seen, utilizes the model of reconciliation in an extraordinary manner because it is the offended party, God, and not the offending party, humans, who takes the initiative and who reconciles — without being content just to call for or to exhort reconciliation. God does not accuse or threaten us but has effected reconciliation, fully and definitively.

This totally gratuitous initiative, which goes in search of sinners and reconciles them, allows understanding Rom 1-3, a passage that seems to say the opposite, by calling humanity to conversion, by threatening, etc., as if conversion and repentance were the conditions of divine justification, as if the semantic model was the prophetic *rîb*. Unfortunately, Rom 1-3 is generally interpreted as a call to conversion made to sinners so that they might desire and obtain justification. Later, one will see that such a reading is a misinterpretation.

<sup>15</sup> PORTER, *Καταλλάσσω in Ancient Greek Literature*, 141.

2.2. 2Cor 6:14<sup>16</sup>

Do not be mismated with unbelievers. For what partnership have righteousness (δικαιοσύνη) and iniquity (ἀνομία)? Or what fellowship has light with darkness? (RSV)

Here one encounters the same trope as in 2Cor 5:21b (δικαιοσύνη for δίκαιοι). The statement assumes the interior transformation of the justified: they cannot unite themselves to the bad in order to do evil. Thus for Paul, justification, righteousness graciously granted to believers, is not solely forensic.

2.3. 2Cor 3:9<sup>17</sup>

For if there was splendor in the dispensation of condemnation (κατάκρισις), the dispensation of righteousness (δικαιοσύνη) must far exceed it in splendor (RSV)

This verse apparently has no connection to the theme of justification, and for this reason it is presented after the verses that are, however, posterior to it. It makes up a part of a rhetorical unit in which Paul compares — it is really a *synkrisis* according to the meaning of the Ancients — the ministry of the old covenant, that of Moses, and that of the new covenant, that of the apostles, in particular his.

The two genitives τῆς κατακρίσεως and τῆς δικαιοσύνης are amphibological: is it a question of objective or qualifying genitives? Whatever the case may be, it is clear that the apostolic ministry has as its object and its effect the righteousness (of the believers). The passage is significant in that it is implicitly or obliquely referring to the Law, to laws, and makes known two things that the preceding passages do not consider: (i) for Paul, the ministry of Moses was not directed towards the promotion of righteousness but towards condemnation. This means that for Paul the Mosaic Law stigmatizes the sin of its subjects and condemns sins and sinners without promoting its/their righteousness. One sees that Paul is not following the Jewish tradition, for which the Law led to knowing, loving and putting into practice the will of God, in short, bringing about righteousness. (ii) For the first time — if 2 Corinthians was written before Galatians — it is implicitly said that the role of the Mosaic Law is not to bring about righteousness but to condemn sins and sinners. The letters to the Galatians and the Romans will develop this point that is raised concerning the question of the circumcision of Christians from non-Jewish origins — was it necessary or not to ask them to be circumcised and

<sup>16</sup> In Greek, Μὴ γίνεσθε ἑτεροζυγοῦντες ἀπίστοις· τίς γὰρ μετοχὴ δικαιοσύνης καὶ ἀνομία, ἢ τίς κοινωνία φωτὶ πρὸς σκότος;

<sup>17</sup> In Greek, εἰ γὰρ τῇ διακονίᾳ τῆς κατακρίσεως δόξα, πολλῶ μᾶλλον περισσεύει ἡ διακονία τῆς δικαιοσύνης δόξης.

thus to become subjects of the Mosaic Law in order to obtain righteousness and the blessings promised to Abraham? Here the question is not confronted but by deducing the consequences of Paul's statements, one can already perceive that for him the (Mosaic) Law does not lead to salvation.

## Conclusions

### Recap of the Data

#### *Justification and Its Components*

The two letters to the Corinthians have allowed identifying some of the components of the Pauline doctrine of justification: (i) its operator, God, who took the initiative, (ii) its instrumental cause, Christ, (iii) its object, a radical interior transformation, (iv), its goal, a life conformed to the effected transformation.

One will have noted that for Paul, justification implies divine grace (χάρις) as the initiative of the offended party, God, shows. Nevertheless, in the passages discussed up to this point, the vocabulary of χάρις — verb and substantive — is lacking.

#### *Justification and the Law*

Even if believers have become the righteousness of God by the salvific death of Christ, the question of the circumcision of those who are not of Jewish origin is not yet — if one accepts the anteriority of 1–2 Corinthians to Galatians and Romans — tackled. For, if one declares to a pious Jew that there is no justification without the work of God in Christ, he will respond that this is valid only for those who are not subjects of the Torah and are not Jews because the Law gives the latter a way that leads to righteousness and salvation. Up to this point, Paul has not shown that there could not be an exception and that one could obtain righteousness if one were under the rule of the Law.

#### *The Role and Importance of the Doctrine of Justification*

In 1 and 2 Corinthians, the vocabulary of justification is not utilized alone but with vocables from other fields (purification, sanctification, reconciliation), in other words, in series in which Paul is clearly proceeding by accumulation. Moreover, the vocabulary of justification is neither clarified nor developed. One can, as a consequence, question its role and its importance: it does not seem (yet) to irrigate the other fields of Pauline theology and does not seem even essential to the developments of 1 and 2 Corinthians. What then is its role, and can one now say, with some, that it constitutes the heart of Pauline theology? An analysis of Galatians and Romans will allow, let us hope, to answer these questions.



### CHAPTER III

#### **Justification in Galatians 1–2<sup>1</sup>**

If in 1 and 2 Corinthians the theme of justification is not developed, it becomes central in Galatians and Romans. As was already said in the introduction, the development of the theme comes from the ecclesial situation in which the question of the circumcision of believers coming from the Gentile world was being asked. Undoubtedly, the eventuality of the circumcision of ethnic Christians was the occasion for the debate, but Paul is going to deal with it by reflecting upon the conditions of justification. Thus, it is the vocabulary of justification that allows Paul to delve into the guiding subject and show all the implications of the possible circumcision of ethnic Christians.

In Galatians, as the occurrences of the vocabulary show, the theme of justification is developed from 2:15 to 5:12<sup>2</sup>:

Gal 2:16-17

[...] yet who know that a man is not justified (δικαιοῦται) by (ἐκ) works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified (δικαιωθῶμεν) by (ἐκ) faith in Christ, and not by (ἐκ) works of the law, because by (ἐκ) works of the law shall no one be justified (δικαιωθήσεται).<sup>17</sup> But if, in our endeavor to be justified (δικαιωθῆναι) in Christ, we ourselves were found to be sinners, is Christ then an agent of sin? Certainly not! (RSV)

Gal 3:8

And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify (δικαιοῦ) the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, “In you shall all the nations be blessed”.

Gal 3:11

Now it is evident that no man is justified (δικαιοῦται) before God by (ἐν) the law; for “He who through (ἐκ) faith is righteous (δίκαιος) shall live”.

Gal 3:24

So that the law was our custodian until Christ came, that we might be justified (δικαιωθῶμεν) by (ἐκ) faith.

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<sup>1</sup> This chapter is close to what has already appeared in ALETTI, *New Approaches*, chapter IX: “Galatians 1-2. Its Logic and Function”, 215-235.

<sup>2</sup> Trans. RSV.

Gal 5:4

You are severed from Christ, you who would be justified (δικαιοῦσθε) by (ἐν) the Law; you have fallen away from grace.

In order to determine the function and the importance of the vocabulary of justification, it is important to have a clear idea of the development of Paul's argumentation, of the proofs that he furnishes in support of his convictions. This means that the first stage of the analysis consists of pinpointing the stages of the argumentation, in other words, the arrangement of the letter in its entirety and in its parts.

## 1. The Arrangement of Galatians 1:11–2:21

### 1.1. *The Letter in Its Entirety*

The majority of commentators are content with pointing out the epistolary framework and the three main parts of the body of the letter:

epistolary framework: "praescript" 1:1-5

body of the letter 1:6–6:10

- (i) the most biographical part 1:11–2:21
- (ii) the most theoretical and didactic part 3:1–5:1  
in 5:2-12 Paul returns to the concrete problem of circumcision;
- (iii) exhortations on the Christian life 5:13–6:10

epistolary framework: "postscript" 6:11-18

This type of division is not very compromising, but in no way does it furnish a key to reading. What is important is to know whether this letter has a guiding theme or if it is formed from parts that are independent of each other as, for example, those in 1 Corinthians.

That there is a guiding theme and that it is the question of circumcision and, more profoundly, the salvific (or non-salvific) status of the Mosaic Law, the present chapter and those that follow will make concretely apparent, without it being necessary at this point in our journey to devote time to a development that would not add anything more to the theme of justification, the subject of this essay.

### 1.2. *Galatians 1:11–2:21*

Although all commentators agree that this passage has its own purpose, there is no unanimity on where it begins (1:6 or even 1:11?) or where it ends (2:14 or even 2:21?). Nevertheless, it is clear that it is a part that is comprised of many autobiographical elements, at least up to 2:14.

## 1.2.1. The beginning of this passage (1:11-12)

For several commentators, the section begins in 1:6, in which they see the *propositio* because of the declaration of the unicity of the Gospel that is then followed by verses in which Paul asks the Galatians not to abandon this Gospel<sup>3</sup>. So they read vv. 6-7:

I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and turning to a different (ἑτερον) gospel — <sup>7</sup> *not that there is another gospel* (ὃ οὐκ ἔστιν ἄλλο), but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. (RSV; author's emphasis)

Unfortunately this reading is not confirmed by the remainder of v. 7, which must be translated differently, as clearly shown by A. Vanhoye, who translates vv. 6-7 in this way<sup>4</sup>:

I am astonished that [...] you are turning to a different gospel, *which is nothing else than* [this] (ὃ οὐκ ἔστιν ἄλλο εἰ μὴ): there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ.

Paul is not saying that there is another Gospel but that the other Gospel towards which the Galatians have gone is nothing but unrest and a distancing from Christ.

Moreover, vv. 8-10 form a micro-unit in which the unpredictable behavior of the Galatians is contrasted to the constancy of Paul, who declares ἀνάθεμα whoever would want to announce a Gospel other than his<sup>5</sup>. These verses do not form a *propositio*, which would have been followed by an explanation and proof, but rather are Paul's strong reaction that is not followed by any commentary. If one follows the classic rhetorical categories, one will say that vv. 8-10 are the στάσις or the *status causae*<sup>6</sup>.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. G.A. KENNEDY, *New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism* (Studies in Religion; Chapel Hill, NC - London 1984) 148-151; R.G. HALL, "The Rhetorical Outline of Galatians. A Reconsideration", *JBL* 106 (1987) 277-287; J.S. VOS, "Die Argumentation des Paulus in Galater 1,1 - 2,10", *The Truth of the Gospel (Gal 1,1-3,11)* (ed. J. LAMBRECHT) (SMB SBE 12; Rome 1993) 11-43.

<sup>4</sup> A. VANHOYE, "La définition de l' 'autre évangile' en Gal 1,6-7", *Bib* 83 (2002) 392-398.

<sup>5</sup> For Paul, there is not another (ἄλλο) Gospel, but, of course, formulations of the Gospel other (ἑτερον) than his are possible. The ἑτερος/ἄλλος distinction is decisive for not misinterpreting the Apostle's statements in these two verses — unlike ἑτερος, which designates an element in a series, ἄλλος designates something of a totally different nature.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. B. MORTARA GARAVELLI, *Manuale di retorica* (Milano 1988) 31.

Note the emphasis on this other Gospel in vv. 6-9:

v. 6 turning to a *different gospel*

v. 8 But even if we, or an angel from heaven,

should preach to you *a gospel contrary* to that which we preached to you

v. 9 If anyone is preaching to you *a gospel contrary* to that which you received.

This repetition clearly indicates that Paul is going to speak of the content of his Gospel and of that announced by others. So the reader cannot help but ask: what other Gospel had been announced, and to what extent is it different from Paul's? This is what vv. 11-12 point to and what will be progressively made known over the course of the letter.

### 1.2.2. The End of the Section, Gal 2:15-21

- There are indications that favor identifying a major caesura between 2:14 and 2:15

- (i) the asyndeton<sup>7</sup> in 2:15 (the criterion is syntactical) and the change of style (passing from narrative writing to discourse).
- (ii) the persons mentioned up to now (the apostles, etc.) are no longer mentioned, except Paul and Christ.
- (iii) Paul clearly begins a new theme, that of justification.

- But some indications permit connecting 2:15-21 to the preceding verses:

- (i) Even if, seemingly, the subject of the discourse changes, in reality, Paul is continuing to allude to the incident at Antioch in order to learn fundamental lessons for ecclesial life. Indeed, vv. 17-18 cannot be understood without the allusion to Peter's behavior. By eating his meals with the uncircumcised, Peter had relativized — a relativization that, for Paul, is in reality a demolition (v. 18) — the rules of separation set down by the Mosaic Law, but under pressure from James' representatives, he returned to the separation of table — that, for Paul, is the equivalent of a reconstruction, v. 18 *πάλιν οἰκοδομῶ*. In short, Gal 2:15-21 is presented as a hermeneutical reflection on Peter's behavior at Antioch by showing the fundamental consequences for the salvific mediation of Christ (Gal 2:17 and 21) and the salvific status of believers (2:18).
- (ii) At the rhetorical level, the passage from dialogue — note the diatribic style of Gal 2:14b — to the declarations in "I" in vv. 18-21, rather than being a break, is a means of emphasizing the solemn aspect of the statements revealing Paul's position. After having stigmatized Peter's behavior, Paul is showing its disastrous consequences for all, in particular for those who are not aware of it, Peter and the Christians from Jewish origins who followed his example (cf. 2:13 and 2:21).

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<sup>7</sup> The asyndeton is the absence of coordinating conjunctions.

- (iii) The allusion to the concrete events ends with vv. 15-21 thanks to which Paul was able to show that his Gospel is not of human origin and comes from a divine revelation.

For these three reasons, one can consider the mini-discourse of Gal 2:15-21 to be inseparable from the verses that precede it.

### 1.2.3. The Development of the Argumentation (1:11 to 2:21)

The *propositio* (in Greek, πρόθεσις):

vv. 11-12 = the Gospel (of Paul) does not come from men but from God.

The *proofs* (in Greek, πίστευεις)

v. 12 to 2:21 = facts and events presented chronologically.

What are the facts that support the *propositio*, in other words: what facts prove that Paul's Gospel is not of human origin but divine?

#### 1 – Before the Encounter with the Resurrected Christ (vv. 13-14)

The Apostle is emphasizing his constancy and his perfection in Judaism and is doing so in order to make it known that if he is announcing what he has previously rejected, it is not because he has an unstable temperament, nor because he was uncomfortable with Judaism, nor because he was unfaithful to the Law. It is a strong argument: how could I have been able, Paul tells us, to be at the origin of a Gospel that previously I had tenaciously fought against?

#### 2 – The Revelation of the Son of God and What Followed (vv. 15-17)

Paul is emphasizing less the revelation (or his vocation) — indicated by the circumstantial subordinate clause in vv. 15-16a — than the decision taken so soon after, which was not to go and present himself to the apostles in Jerusalem in order to receive there the content of the Gospel but to go away first to Arabia and then to Damascus.

#### 3 – An Argument Based on the Geographical and Temporal Distance (vv. 18-24)

Paul must, of course, admit to having gone to Jerusalem and to having met with the apostles. But he minimizes this meeting. He says that he was there for only a few days — which would have excluded an initiation into the Gospel that requires more time —, and confirms having met only two apostles.

As for his stay in Syria (vv. 21-24), his brief description has as its function indirectly emphasizing that the local Churches were also not responsible for his knowledge of the Gospel and that by giving thanks to God, these Churches had implicitly recognized the value of this Gospel.

#### 4 – The Role of the Official Visit to Jerusalem in the Argumentation (2:1-10)

In Gal 2:1, the purpose of recalling the long period separating the two visits to Jerusalem is to emphasize that the Gospel announced by Paul for so many years does not come from the apostles — who were, in fact, far away in Jerusalem.

But eventually, a more formal meeting had to have taken place so that the Gospel of Paul could be recognized by all the others. Paul notes that the initiative of this meeting came neither from him nor from the apostles but (as before) from a divine revelation, and that if he expounded his Gospel to the apostles in Jerusalem, it was not from coercion but from a personal decision. He adds that this Gospel was communicated to them *κατ'ἰδίαν*, in an unofficial manner, which also indirectly emphasizes that there was no suspicion on the part of the local authorities.

If Paul points out that the apostles did not impose circumcision on Titus, it is to make his readers understand that even the apostles recognized that the Gospel did not require circumcision. This is not explicitly said but strongly suggested. Thus, Paul gives a supplementary proof of the divine origin of his Gospel: the Jerusalem apostles, themselves observant Jews, did not force Titus to be circumcised! In Gal 2:5, Paul also recalls his steadfastness when faced with whoever, apostle or not, would have wanted him to give in on this point.

It is also accentuating the solemn agreement between Peter and Paul, representing both apostolates, the first among the Jews and the other among the Gentiles. More than the agreement, Paul is asserting the apostles' recognition of the divine — thus not human<sup>8</sup> — origin and content of his Gospel — a Gospel without circumcision.

On the content of his Gospel, Paul still does not have anything more precise to say, but one is already able to understand that it concerns the relationship between ethnic and Judeo-Christians, as v. 3 on the uncircumcision of Titus points out, v. 4 on Christian freedom — the fact of not requiring Gentiles to be circumcised —, and, in v. 7, the expressions “the gospel to the uncircumcised” and “the gospel to the circumcised”.

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<sup>8</sup> Cf., in v. 9, *γινόντες τὴν χάριν τὴν δοθεῖσάν μοι*.



## 5 – The Incident at Antioch (2:11-14)

By mentioning this event, Paul again wants to bring to light the divine origin of his Gospel. For the calling out of Peter shows that what is at stake is neither prestige, nor personal authority, nor rivalry, but the truth of a Gospel revealed by God Himself (v. 14), a Gospel which must for this reason be submitted to Peter, the leader of the apostles. The way in which these events are related allows seeing what are the essential components of Paul's Gospel. Why indeed does he only bring up the communion of table between Peter and the uncircumcised believers? Because by being at the table of the non-Jewish believers and by most probably sharing their dishes (v. 12), Peter is not respecting the strict rules of *kashrut* and, in this way, is recognizing their relative character. By doing this, he was able to celebrate the Last Supper with the non-Jewish believers and to show the unity of believers in Christ. But Paul mentions neither Peter's motivation, nor the communion of table, nor the separation that follows. He only asserts the disastrous effects of Peter's about-face (vv. 15-21).

If Paul mentioned the incident at Antioch, it is because it allows him to go further in his reflection on the relationship between ethnic and Judeo-Christians. Undoubtedly, if in order to have full participation in the ecclesial life — in other words, not to be excluded from the Jewish celebrations —, the ethnic Christians had to have been circumcised, a Judaization of the Church would have been inevitable. And this, according to Paul, goes against the truth of the Gospel. That is why he does not hesitate to reproach Peter, treating him as a hypocrite (Gal 2:13).

We have up to now examined the arguments chosen by Paul in order to explain and to prove his *propositio* (Gal 1:11-12). But he does not say when God revealed this Gospel to him. We know that it comes from *God* and that it was the subject of revelation, but was he informed of it during the encounter with Christ or in the months, indeed, the year(s) afterwards? Moreover, we must assume that this information was not necessary to the argumentation. What is important is that Paul has been able to demonstrate in various ways that he had encouraged the communion of table between ethnic and Judeo-Christians, a communion that, formerly as an irreproachable and zealous Jew, he would have rejected at all costs. Because of these convincing proofs, he is able from now on to clarify the content of this Gospel that was revealed to him and to demonstrate its consequences (Gal 2:15-21).

The argumentation that goes from Gal 1:11-2:14 does not explicitly speak of justification. So why, if it does not directly touch upon the subject of this essay, have we followed its progression? Because most commentators, not having identified the *propositio* in Gal 1:11-12, have had great difficulty showing the function of these developments in the letter. The statements of Gal 2:15-21 on justification

are enhanced by the proofs that precede them, and it was important to present them correctly.

## 2. Galatians 2:15-21 and Justification

Gal 2:15-21 explicitly speaks of justification, and exegetical problems are not lacking. But as the information furnished by the most recent commentaries (such as those of Martyn, Fee, Schreiner and de Boer) are pertinent and complete, it will suffice to consider only the points that they left fallow in order to see how the question of justification is treated.

### 2.1. Arrangement and Style of the Rhetorical Unit

In general, the model of the arrangement accepted by commentators is that of the vocabulary, at least for v. 16, which is said to be concentric and which is actually a *reversio*<sup>9</sup>.

	knowing that
a	a man is not justified
b	by (ἐξ) works of the law
c	but through (διὰ) faith in Jesus Christ
d	we have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified
c	by (ἐκ) faith in Christ
b	and not by (ἐξ) works of the law
	because by (ἐξ) works of the law
a	no one will be justified

The semantic arrangement of vv. 17-21 is concentric as well:

a = vv. 17-18 negative semantic conclusions (two conditionals)

b = vv. 19-20 positive experience

a = v. 21 negative semantic conclusion (one conditional)

If one combines this disposition and the development of the argument, one sees that v. 16 is clarified and explained by vv. 17-21:

<sup>9</sup> Cf. A. VANHOYE, *Lettera ai Galati* (Milano 2000) 14, and A. PITTA, *La lettera ai Galati* (Scritti delle origine cristiane 9; Bologna 1996) 139-140. The technique consists of repeating in inverse order the elements of a sentence or a discourse. This inversion (i) is a technique originally linked to oral tradition (ii) that does not necessarily determine a literary unit because it can repeat in inverse order and in a new unit ideas and themes presented in the preceding unit. Thus, one must avoid calling every type of *reversio* a chiasmus because a chiasmus forms a linguistic or rhetorical unit.

<i>common thesis</i>	v. 16	<i>neg</i> = (justified) not based on works of the Law <i>pos</i> = (justified) by πίστις Χριστοῦ <i>neg</i> = (justified) not based on works of the Law
<i>proofs and counter-proofs</i>	vv. 17-21	<i>neg</i> = Christ an agent of sin, (ἐί) <i>pos</i> = I, crucified with Christ, who lives in me <i>neg</i> = Christ died to no purpose (εἰ)

In each of these rhetorical units, the negations are found at the periphery and the affirmations, found at the center, describe the positive reality lived in Christ.

But in these verses there also exists a logical development. In fact, after having stated in an apodictic way his conviction, which was accepted by all (v. 16), Paul shows that Peter's position<sup>10</sup> — returning to the separation of table by observing *kashruth* set out by the Law<sup>11</sup> — has disastrous effects for the mediator of justification, Christ, and for those who are its beneficiaries, in particular the Judeo-Christians. In other words, the thesis stated in v. 16 is specified and progressively confirmed, with the help of various proofs: (i) some formulated with the Greek logic of the time (in  $A \rightarrow B$ ; vv. 17-18 and 21), in order to emphasize the negative effects, (ii) others based on experience (vv. 19-20), in order to describe the positive relationship in and with Christ. Thus the logical development is as follows:

- v. 15 statement on the status of Judeo-Christians indicating *what formulates* the thesis in v. 16
- v. 16 common thesis = on the justification by πίστις Χριστοῦ without the works of the Law
- vv. 17-21a contrast between the common thesis and Peter's behavior:
  - vv. 17-18 negative consequences for Christ and the beneficiaries of justification
  - vv. 19-20 the justified cannot fall under the verdict of the Law because they are dead to the Law
  - vv. 21 reprise: if justification comes by the Law, then Christ has died in vain.

<sup>10</sup> In vv. 17-21, Peter is not mentioned, but everything that is stated is clearly alluding to the incident at Antioch. The change from "you" (v. 14) to "I" (vv. 17-21) is obviously a rhetorical technique.

<sup>11</sup> As already said, written with a capital letter, the vocable 'Law' designates the Torah, the law that Tradition says was transmitted by Moses.

## 2.2. *Exegesis and Theology*

### 2.2.1. Verses 15-16

#### Some exegetical questions

##### V. 15

The vocable ‘sinners’ (ἁμαρτωλοί) designates those who are separated from God and are going towards their destruction, as Paul says in other passages<sup>12</sup>. The sharp contrast with which v. 15 describes what differentiates Jews and pagans is clearly indicating that the vocable is describing a dramatic situation, the state of whoever is without God, deprived of all hope, etc<sup>13</sup>. Thus, would Jews designate pagans and idolaters.

As the commentaries emphasize, the relationship of vv. 15 and 16 is paradoxical. Indeed, v. 15 declares that unlike pagan idolaters, Jews are not sinners, and without a transition, v. 16 states the opposite, since these same Jews, by citing Ps 142/143, confess to not being able to be justified by their observance of the Law, which is the equivalent of saying that they remain in their sins.

##### V. 16

This verse recalls the agreement between Paul and the apostles of Jerusalem, an agreement by which all recognized the validity of Paul’s Gospel and accepted that circumcision — and thus the obligation to become a subject of the Law — played no part in it (cf. Gal 2:6). I have already shown elsewhere, concurring with other commentators, that v. 16, at least in its second part, uses the same terms of the agreement Paul reached at Jerusalem. The discrepancy is between this agreement on the non-necessity of circumcision and the separation of table: Peter was in agreement with uncircumcision but did not draw the same conclusion for the separation of table<sup>14</sup>. As I just said, v. 16 is divisible into two parts (a recognition, followed by a decision) the formulation of which does not immediately seem compatible — the conjunction ἐὰν μὴ can indeed introduce either an exception or an opposition thereby changing the meaning, as the readings from the following table show:

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<sup>12</sup> See 1Cor 1:18; 2Cor 2:15; 4:3,9.

<sup>13</sup> Do not forget that a person who belongs to the category of the just may sin, but, nevertheless, is not a sinner. On these distinctions, see M. WINNINGE, *Sinners and the Righteous*. A Comparative Study of the Psalms of Solomon and Paul’s Letters (CB NT Series 26; Stockholm 1995).

<sup>14</sup> ALETTI, *New Approaches*, 231-234.

if an exception:	a man is not justified based on works required by the Law (Mosaic), <i>except</i> [if he believes] in Christ.
if an opposition:	a man is not justified based on works required by the Law (Mosaic), <i>but</i> [he is justified] <i>solely</i> by his faith in Christ.

According to the first reading, the Mosaic Law remains an instrument of justification for only those who believe in Christ. And according to the second, only faith in Christ justifies, without the Mosaic Law. Because v. 16a is recalling the agreement in Jerusalem by which the apostles recognized and accepted Paul's Gospel — a Gospel in which circumcision had no part, in other words, the obligation to become a subject of the Mosaic Law — the first reading cannot be valid.

The formulation of v. 16c, which is Pauline, puts an end to the ambiguity of v. 16a and audaciously separates justice from the Law. Audacity because the recognition of a person's justice is generally made in reference to a law, Mosaic or not; whoever obeys this law is declared just — the observation is valid *a fortiori* for the law of God. And in this v. 16c, Paul explicitly denies that by practicing the Law, by doing what it asks, one can be justified. How is he able to assert so strongly that the observance of the Law does not render the Jew just, when, unlike Ps 142/143:2, other passages from the Scriptures assert that there exist just ones<sup>15</sup> and while Paul himself seems to declare the opposite elsewhere (in Phil 3:6-8)? The question is even more pertinent because the phrase ἐξ ἔργων νόμου that is added to the citation by Paul implies that it comes from Ps 142/143:2. By doing this, is Paul respecting the intention of the text cited or not? He will have to explain himself on this position concerning the powerlessness of the works of the Law to obtain justification in Gal 3–4. But he does not do so now because v. 16 is recalling a conviction shared by all the apostles and thus does not need to be proven here. What Paul must nevertheless show — and he will do so in vv. 17-21 —, is that Peter's attitude at Antioch was incompatible with the agreement of that time, the same one reformulated in v. 16.

All recent commentaries analyze all the expressions of v. 16 in detail, in particular two that are in the amphibological genitive: ἔργα νόμου and πίστις Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ. For the first, which has experienced a revival since 1984<sup>16</sup> and for the subject that occupies us here, let us only retain the most obvious meaning, the one suggested

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Gen 6:9; 7:1; Prov 24:6; Psa 1; 5:13; 7:10; 10/11:5; 33/34:16, 20; etc.

<sup>16</sup> The year when 4QMMT was published. Cf. E. QIMRON – J. STRUGNELL, *Qumran Cave 4 – V. Miqsat Ma'ase Ha-Torah* (Discoveries in the Judean Desert X; Oxford 1994). 4QMMT, corresponds to the fragments 4Q394, 4Q395, 4Q396, 4Q397, 4Q398, 4Q399. The expression מִקְסַת מַעֲשֵׂי הַתּוֹרָה is found in 4Q398; "some works of [= prescribed by] the Law"). On 4QMMT, see the well-informed article of R. PENNA, "Le 'opere della Legge' in s. Paolo e 4QMMT", *Qumran e le origini cristiane* (Ricerche storico-bibliche; Bologna 1997) 155-176.

by Dunn: "The phrase itself ('works of the law') means most naturally 'deeds or actions which the law requires'"<sup>17</sup>. But to which rules of the Law is Paul referring? The anterior context (Gal 2:1-14) permits responding that it is a question of circumcision and the rules of separation. But is the expression designating only these obligations or all actions required by the Law? The remainder of the letter to the Galatians will shed more light on this point.

The second expression, πίστις Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, is itself ambiguous. If the traditional reading reads it as an objective genitive, "faith *in* Jesus/Christ", for several decades those who opt for the subjective genitive, "faithfulness *of* Christ"<sup>18</sup>, have been more numerous. It is true that v. 20 mentions the death of Christ for love of us, which could mean that the expression πίστις Ἰησοῦ and/or Χριστοῦ in v. 16 has as its function preparing for v. 20 and is referring to the faithfulness of Christ. Nevertheless, the expression also finds its equivalent in v. 16: "we have believed in Christ Jesus". Let us also not forget that in several writings of the time, one encounters the substantive πίστις followed by an objective genitive<sup>19</sup>. This being said, one can legitimately ask if Paul has not utilized the genitive in order to connote both relationships: that of faith *in* Christ and that of the faithfulness *of* Christ, πίστις thus being doubly Christologized.

### The Traits of Justification

Justification is described by verbs that are all in the passive, which clearly indicates that man is not the author or the operator of his justification. In order to know if this passive is theological, the context, anterior and/or posterior, is most useful. It also holds true for determining if the usage of the verb is declarative, in other words, forensic, or factitive, and thus causative. Let us begin with the nuance of the verb: declarative or factitive? The answer is indirectly given to us in v. 17: "if, in our endeavor to be justified in Christ, we ourselves were found to be sinners [...]"<sup>20</sup> in which Paul contrasts "to be justified" with "to be sinners": justification is thus

<sup>17</sup> J.D.G. DUNN, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians* (Black's New Testament Commentaries; London 1993) 135.

<sup>18</sup> One can attribute this reading to R.B. HAYS, *The Faith of Jesus Christ. An Investigation of the Narrative Substructure of Galatians 3:1-4:11* (SBL DS 56; Chico, CA 1983, 2002).

<sup>19</sup> POLYBIUS, *History*, II, 4.8.1: "through the trust placed in the friends" (διὰ τῶν φίλων πίστεως); STRABO, *Geographica*, I, 3.17.29: "our belief in the works of nature and also in the changes that are being brought to pass by other agencies"; PLUTARCH, *Fabius Maximus*, V, 5.1: "confident of a favorable issue"; *Pelopidas*, XXVI, 6.1: "the trust placed in its justice"; *Caius Marius*, XLIII, 9.2; *Phocion*, I, 6.3; *Cato Minor*, XLIII, 10.2; LV, 1.4; *Cicero*, XLVII, 5.3: "trust in Caesar"; *Brutus*, XXIX, 4.2.

<sup>20</sup> Trans. RSV.



not only declarative, it consists in rendering just those who were sinners. Thus, it is describing the passage from one state or status to another. One can respond to the question concerning the verbs in the passive thus: who is able to cause the passing from the status of sinner to that of just? Only God alone. Thus, the passives of v. 16 are theological.

The third trait of justification that v. 16 highlights is that it is not obtained based on the Law but only on faith as the opposition of the prepositional phrases ἐξ ἔργα νόμου and διὰ πίστεως indicates. As was said above, Paul is separating faith and Law, an impossible separation for a believing Jew because for him faith is necessarily manifested in the observance of the Law. Because of such an extraordinary statement, Paul must — in Gal 3:10-14 — explain how the Law and faith are separated.

Another trait also emanates from v. 16: faith (alone) is the unique instrument of justification for all human beings; there is no exception or alternative, in other words, there cannot be a justification by the Law (for Jews) and another by faith alone (for non-Jews).

### 2.2.2. Verses 17-21

We have already presented above the major lines of the arrangement of this rhetorical micro-unit, the function of which is to legitimate the affirmations of v. 16 by showing the adverse consequences that Peter's attitude unintentionally provoked. Verses 17-21 have the form typical of an *a contrario* argument:

- (i) *a contrario* argument (vv. 17-18) emphasizing the disastrous consequences of a return to the Law for the Jew who thinks he must return to the total observance of the Law:
  - consequences for Christ, mediator of justification:  
he would then be the agent of sin
  - consequences for the recipients of justification (Judeo-Christians), who, by returning to the observance, admit to having transgressed the Law, thus to having sinned, and as a consequence, of not being justified
- (ii) but he is not able to do so because the Law no longer has power over Christ and Christians: all indeed are dead to the Law (vv. 19-20)
- (iii) a brief argument *a contrario* summarizing the two preceding stages (v. 21).

### 2.2.3. Verses 17-18

Without going into a detailed exegesis that the reader can find in all the recent commentaries, let us look at what most directly concerns justification.

## V. 17

Using a preposition different from those (διὰ and ἐκ) in v. 16, the expression δικαιωθῆναι ἐν Χριστῷ (“to be justified in Christ”, RSV) repeats Christ’s essential role in the operation of justification; the preposition ἐν can denote instrumental causality but also membership. If it is difficult to say what Paul is designating exactly by this ἐν, it is, nevertheless, clear that for him there is no justification without Christ and without a relationship with Christ, as the following verses are going to develop.

The second trait that emerges in v. 17 is the contrast between “to be justified” and “to be sinners”. Being justified implies a transformation, a passage from being a sinner to being just. And this is the contrast with which Paul is playing: the Jewish believer who abandoned the strict observance of the Law — because justified in Christ — and then returns to it, would he not from then on give the impression that this distancing was evil and that he repents of it? But does this not signify that his justification was a pure illusion? This is what v. 18 is expressing in an elliptical manner.

## V. 18

If I build up again those things (ταῦτα) which (ἃ) I tore down, then I prove myself a transgressor. (RSV)

The verse is elliptical first of all because the pronouns ἃ and ταῦτα do not refer to anything precise. Nevertheless, the context allows understanding that Paul is alluding to the behavior of Peter who, at Antioch, abandoned the Jewish rules of separation and then respected them again. However, the metaphorical contrast demolish/reconstruct seems to be an exaggeration. By abandoning the rules of separation of table — and probably those of dietary *kashruth* —, Peter certainly did not want to demolish the Torah as a moral and religious system. He only relativized the rules regarding the person’s exterior and did like Jesus, who went to have meals with sinners, without wanting to abandon either the spirit or the intentionality of the Law. It is, nevertheless, true that at that time the rules of separation and *kashruth* had a decisive identifying function, especially in the *diaspora*: if a Jew did not observe them, another Jew could think that he was effectively renouncing the observance of the Torah and that he was *destroying* what God had given him in order to obey His will. Thus, one could not take these rules lightly. This explains the usage of the hyperbolic καταλύειν.

If Paul is utilizing the vocable ‘transgressor’ (παραβάτης), it is because transgression assumes a rule, a canon, and thus an obligation, and that the latter is the Mosaic Law, the surrounding verses suggest. For, by returning to the Law, the Jew who had relativized it — Peter, who had eaten with uncircumcised believers —

implicitly recognizes having been mistaken and having transgressed. This means that by returning to (the practice of) the Law, he recognizes its absolute value. But then his relativization — in the name of justification in Christ — makes Christ the cause of the transgression and the agent of sin — v. 18 allows understanding the elliptical character of v. 17.

The point of view expressed in these verses is obviously Paul's. It is probable that Peter only saw his attitude as one of flexibility and not as a sinful transgression. That is why Paul is now going to have to show that the stakes are of the utmost importance.

#### 2.2.4. Verses 19-21

The arrangement is the alternating type<sup>21</sup>:

v. 19	a = death b = life	I died to the law so that I might live to God
v. 20	a' = death b' = life	I have been crucified with Christ Christ lives in me and I live by faith in the Son of God

In contrast to the preceding verses that describe a negative situation, vv. 19-20 are centered on the close and personal relationship of the believer with Christ, in terms of rupture or separation from the Law (in the past, v. 19) and in union with Christ (in the present, v. 20)<sup>22</sup>.

##### V. 19a

What does "I through the/a law died to the/a law" mean? The difficulty comes from the word 'law' (νόμος) not being preceded by the article and thereby being able to be understood in at least two ways:

- through the law *of Christ* I died to the *Mosaic* law
- through the *Mosaic* law I died to the *Mosaic* law.

For the following reasons, one will not maintain as probable the second interpretation. Since the beginning of Gal 2, the question is clearly that of the works required by the Law, and nothing indicates the presence of an antanaclasis<sup>23</sup>. In fact, the usage of νόμος without an article is not at all surprising, at least for the

<sup>21</sup> In VANHOYE, *Galati*, 42, the proposed arrangement is the same.

<sup>22</sup> The goal of the rhetorical techniques is to point out that union with Christ excludes any connection with the Law.

<sup>23</sup> The antanaclasis is the repetition of the same word or same expression in two different senses. Cf., for ex., Rom 2:14; 3:21; etc.

first occurrence because after a preposition the article is not necessary — such a concession exists in classic Greek. That there is not an antanaclasis — that the first νόμος is not designating the law of Christ —, one can prove by v. 19b: the dead are no longer subject to any law whatsoever: being crucified, Christ and the believer with him are no longer subject to any law, in particular the Mosaic Law.

What exactly does v. 19b mean, as paradoxical as it is, since still being alive, the believer cannot be dead, no more than Christ, now resurrected, is living? And when was the believer crucified with Christ? The expression is one of the most elliptical, and one can only say that it has as its function to account for v. 19a. Because to die to the Law implies that one is no longer under the Law — the dead are no longer subject to laws! By his death, Christ was no longer subject to the Law — by dying, he died to the Law —, and clearly his resurrection has not placed him again under the power of the Law. Thus, the affirmation of v. 19b assumes that the believer has been united to Christ crucified, that he is symbolically dead with him and definitely removed from the power of the Law<sup>24</sup>. In other words, only union with Christ can liberate from the Law, which has power only over those still belonging to the old world.

Let us return to v. 19a. Why has the believer's death (to the Law) been effected *by means of the Law*? The affirmation makes sense only in relation to Christ's situation: he himself was put to death *according to the penalties required by the Law*, and thus died to this same Law. The believer, having died crucified with Christ, is thus also dead to the Law by means of this same Law. But being dead (to the Law) does not constitute an end in itself; it is a death for life, a life for God. It does not suffice to be dead (to the Law); vv. 19b-20 mean that there is justification only if death (with Christ) results in an entry into a totally different life.

## V. 20

Paul — who is speaking in the name of all believers — says “I live” (ζῶ) and at the same time “it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me” (ζῆ δὲ ἐν ἐμοὶ Χριστός): life with the Resurrected One is a union that does not dissolve the believer's identity. A paradoxical relationship, which is described as living in/by faith (ἐν πίστει).

The difficulty comes, however, from the genitive Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ that determines the word πίστις: faith in Christ or faithfulness of Christ? The commentators who

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<sup>24</sup> For many exegetes, v. 19 is not alluding to Baptism. The expressions, being so elliptical, do not allow a precise designation. In fact, Paul can very well be envisaging the entire process of faith, and then it would be difficult to say that Baptism is not a part of the process of identification with Christ crucified.

opt for the subjective genitive are relying upon the end of v. 20 where is mentioned the love of Christ who went as far as giving his life for each believer; and for those who prefer the objective genitive, the believer responds by faith in Christ who loved him and gave his life for him. The difference in the reading can be diagramed thus:

objective genitive = faith in Christ	the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God (RSV)
subjective genitive = faithfulness of Christ	the life I now live in the flesh I live by the faithfulness of the Son of God

## V. 21

The last verse of the argumentation returns to the form of a strong opposition on the instrument of justification: "If justification were through the Law, then Christ died to no purpose" (RSV). The reader will have noted the passing from the works of the Law (v. 16) to the Law: thus Paul ends his first argumentation by directly opposing the Law and Christ, who is the sole instrument of justification. Between the Law and Christ, it is necessary to choose. This is the incompatibility of which Paul reminded Peter at the time of the incident at Antioch and that he is going to recall once again to the Christians of Galatia.

From the affirmations of Gal 2:15-21, one can immediately learn a lesson for the Judeo-Christian to whom these verses are addressed. Although of Jewish origins, he is no longer obligated to observe the rules of separation and *kashruth*, and by not doing so, he does not become a transgressor, a sinner, an object of the curse promised to whoever does not observe *all* the commandments of the Law. In short, he does not fall into the category of pagan idolaters (v. 15).

It is also interesting to see that in vv. 19-20 the vocabulary of justification is relying upon another, that of the death/life of Christ. Justification finds its confirmation by the experience of the love of Christ.

## Conclusions

The statements of Paul in Gal 2:15-21 are addressed to the believer from Jewish origins. Indeed, vv. 18 and 19 describe a believer who has been freed from the Mosaic observances and has returned to them. But if the argumentation is mainly aimed at the experience of Jews who have believed in Christ, some affirmations are valid for all, ethnic Christians as well as Judeo-Christians. But why does Paul not mention the former? Undoubtedly because they are not (yet) necessary to the argumentation. But now he is going to have to speak to them and demonstrate that, not being circumcised and thus non-Jews, they are, nevertheless, fully justified. And he must do this, let us not forget, because the oracle of Gen 17:10-14 makes circumcision the condition necessary for obtaining the divine blessings.





## CHAPTER IV

### Justification in Galatians 3–4

In Gal 1-2, the questions raised by the uncircumcision of believers are only briefly mentioned. But in Gal 3, Paul begins to address directly the difficulties encountered by the Churches of Galatia concerning the circumcision of non-Jewish believers in order to show that these believers do not have to submit to the yoke of the Law (by being circumcised) in order to obtain a justification that they have already obtained by faith alone.

As a whole, commentators agree that Gal 3:1–4:11 forms a consistent argumentation in which the proofs are of two types, as the following indicates:

- 3:1-5 proofs based on experience (the Spirit and the spiritual gifts received)
- 3:6-29 proofs based on Scriptures,
  - vv. 6-14 synchronic argumentation
    - vv. 6-9 the example of Abraham that shows that justification comes by faith alone
    - vv. 10-14 scriptural proofs showing that the Law and faith are separated and that the Law does not lead to justification
  - vv. 15-29 diachronic argumentation that sets forth the status and the function of the Law
  - vv. 15-18 the Law is posterior to the promise and does not supplant it
    - vv. 19-25 the Law – as a pedagogue until the coming of (the) Christ
    - vv. 26-29 in Christ, believers are sons of God and descendants of Abraham
- 4:1-7 from slavery to filiation and to freedom
- 4:8-11 a brief conclusion in the form of an apostrophe.

#### 1. Galatians 3:1-5. The Experience of Justification

Paul begins by reminding the Galatians that they do not have to be circumcised and become subjects of the Law since by adhering to the Gospel, by believing in Christ preached by Paul, they have already received God.

Several vocables are reminiscent of the preceding unit; but in order to indicate that he is beginning a new development, Paul changes style by multiplying the apostrophes and the questions (vv. 1-5), a genre that is called a *diatribe*. And the rhetorical genre utilized in these verses, the blame, is clearly epideictic<sup>1</sup>. Of course, one could add that if Paul is reproaching the Galatians, it is because they are no

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<sup>1</sup> The blame, in Greek *ἐλεγχος*, and the praise, in Greek *ἐγκώμιον* are typical of the epideictic genre.

longer in a just relationship with God: so would it not be a question of a situation analogous to that denounced by the Old Testament *rib*? No, because Gal 3:1 clearly indicates that the Galatians are responsible neither for the situation nor for the doctrine to which some want to make them adhere (cf. Gal 1:7): Paul himself admits that they have been bewitched and that what it is now necessary for him to do is to reformulate the stakes of the debate clearly. What he is combatting is not injustice — as the *rib* did — but a grave error arising from ignorance. And for this reason, the argumentation is going to have to be theoretical from now on.

These verses begin and end with the same oppositions: ἐξ ἔργων νόμου and ἐξ ἀκοῆς πίστεως. Thanks to the correspondences to the previous unit (Gal 2:15-21), it is possible to parallel the phrase ἐξ ἀκοῆς πίστεως of Gal 3:2, 5 with the phrase ἐκ πίστεως Χριστοῦ of Gal 2:16:

Gal 2:16	Gal 3:2, 5
ἐξ ἔργων νόμου	ἐξ ἔργων νόμου
ἐκ πίστεως Χριστοῦ	ἐξ ἀκοῆς πίστεως

Even if the two phrases ἐξ ἀκοῆς πίστεως and ἐκ πίστεως Χριστοῦ are not identical, they clearly are designating the same reality because hearing the faith, the ἀκοή πίστεως, is inseparable from its object since it is faith in the Gospel.

Paul's reasons for passing from one formula to another are not obvious, but one can approach them if one takes into account the rhetoric of Gal 3:1-5 that emphasizes God's action by which the believers have received everything without needing to become subjects of the Law. Moreover, the phrase has the effect of contrasting works to hearing<sup>2</sup>, Law to faith, activity to passivity, and making faith something that is received. These indirect oppositions are undeniable but must not be forced because Paul never says that faith is passive.

What is striking is the change in the divine actor: from Christ crucified, Paul passes, without a transition, to the Spirit. And without saying it directly, he seems to establish a link between justification and the Spirit. In fact, if one extends the series of correspondences that exist between Gal 2:16 and 3:2, 5, one sees that justification and the Spirit are received by the same means of faith:

Gal 2:16	ἐξ ἔργων νόμου	διὰ / ἐκ πίστεως Χριστοῦ	justification
Gal 3:2, 5	ἐξ ἔργων νόμου	ἐξ ἀκοῆς πίστεως	a gift of the Spirit

<sup>2</sup> The opposition is analogous to Rom 10:5-13, between executing the demands of the Law and believing with the heart.

This does not mean that the two realities are identical — because many other gifts come ἐξ' ἁκοῆς πίστεως: faith, hope, love, etc., without their being identical. Paul does not say if the gift of the Spirit is the equivalent of that of justification or if it is its effect. If one cannot merge them, one can at least say that they are inseparable. But, if justification and the Spirit are inseparable, why did the Apostle not explicitly say to the ethnic Christians of Galatia that they had already been justified without having become subjects of the Law? It is because they did not see how receiving the Spirit had exempted them from becoming subjects of the Law.

It is not until Gal 3:1-5 that Paul clearly states the difficulty faced by the Galatians. At this point, one learns that the believers of Galatia want to submit to the yoke of the Law and that, for the Apostle, it is a terrible temptation because it involves the very Gospel itself. Although the formulation of the problem is still generic, the Apostle's reproach no longer leaves in doubt what is at stake.

## 2. Galatians 3:6-14. Recourse to the Authority of the Scriptures

If the arguments based on experience are essential, they are not, however, sufficient. Paul must indeed show that the experience of the Galatians and his own position concerning justification by faith alone (without the works of the Law) find their ultimate foundation in the Scriptures themselves. The arguments from authority are necessary and decisive; for this reason, the Apostle's reflection is going to be quite lengthy.

If the authority from Scriptures is appealed to throughout the argumentation, it is done so in a diverse way. In vv. 6-14, Paul begins by taking the Scriptures as a complete and unified norm from which he is going to draw conclusions on the principle of justification by faith alone without (works of) the Law, whereas in vv. 15-29, he is going to describe the lineage of this same Law — its appearance, its function and its purpose — in a history that begins with the promise to Abraham and goes to Christ.

### 2.1. *The Purpose of Gal 3:6-14*

All commentators recognize that Gal 3:6-14 forms a rhetorical unit in which the demonstration is exclusively scriptural, and so this cannot be contested. It is also accepted that Paul's argumentation is developed in two units, vv. 6-9, in which Paul affirms the essential link that exists between faith and blessing, and vv. 10-14, in which he excludes the Law<sup>3</sup> from bringing with it blessing and justification:

<sup>3</sup> As said above, with a capital letter, this vocable designates only the *Mosaic Law* and not any other law.

vv. 6-9	the essential link between faith and blessing (from Abraham to the Nations):
	v. 6 = Gen 15:6 "And he [Abraham] believed the Lord; and he reckoned it to him as righteousness". (RSV)
	v. 8 = Gen 12:3/18:18 "by you/him all the families of the earth will bless themselves".
vv. 10-14	the link between the Law and curse (and not justification by the Law)
	v. 10 = Deut 27:26 "Cursed be he who does not confirm the words of this law by doing them".
	v. 11 = Hab 2:4 "the righteous shall live by his faith".
	v. 12 = Lev 18:5 "You shall therefore keep my statutes and my ordinances, by doing which a man shall live"
	v. 13 = Deut 21:23 "for a hanged man is accursed by God".

Thus, Paul begins by emphasizing the fact that justification comes through faith (vv. 6-9), and then shows that the Law is not associated with this process (vv. 10-14). He does this to make clear that the ethnic Christians have been justified without being subjects of the Law, in other words, without having been circumcised and without having fulfilled the works required by the Law. It is important to note that both units end with the blessing of the Nations (in other words, the non-Jews or the uncircumcised), and in this way, the argumentation is oriented positively. This dual *terminus ad quem* must not be forgotten:

vv. 8-9 the Gentiles (ἐθνῇ) blessed (εὐλογοῦνται) with Abraham

v. 14 that ... the blessing (εὐλογία) of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles (ἐθνῇ)

If the *terminus ad quem* is clear, the way that leads to it is less so. Nevertheless, one easily perceives that the difficulty that is confronted by Paul and that comes from Gen 17:10-14, in which God Himself explicitly says to the Patriarch that the uncircumcised will have to be cut off from His people, in other words, will be excluded from the family of Abraham and the blessings that were promised to it. Thus, it is circumcision that leads to becoming a member of the people, a descendant of Abraham and a subject of the Law. Becoming a subject of the Law is itself essential for obtaining the blessings promised to Abraham since, *a contrario*, exclusion from the people (for being uncircumcised) is identical to being excluded from Abraham's descendants. Thus, Paul had to show that the non-Jewish believers are blessed in (and with) Abraham (cf. vv. 6-9) without undergoing circumcision and becoming subjects of the Law (cf. vv. 10-14). This is the purpose of this passage.

### 2.1.1. Verses 6-9

In vv. 6-9, Paul utilizes the Scriptures to show that the Gentiles have a part of the blessings promised to Abraham. For the Apostle, what is important is that Scripture has announced in advance (προεηγγέλισατο) the blessing of the Gentiles in Abraham, and this has been so from the beginning (Gen 12:3); this blessing thus does not come from God's having changed His mind — it, after all, precedes

Gen 17:10-14. Moreover, He has wanted that it come through Abraham and by faith as it did for Abraham.

Considering their purpose, these verses are clear, but they, nevertheless, raise difficulties, because (i) if it is necessary to be a part of the descendants (σπέρμα) of Abraham in order to inherit the blessings, and if this necessitates being circumcised, as God required in Gen 17:10-14, must not the ethnic Christians undergo circumcision in order to share in the blessings? (ii) Verses 6-9 are also applied to the Ἰουδαῖοι who say they are men of faith, a faith that is expressed in obedience to the divine will promulgated in the Law, an obedience wanted by God Himself.

Thus, Paul must show that the Gentiles have obtained the blessings promised to Abraham without having become subjects of the Law, in other words, without having been circumcised and thus having become Ἰουδαῖοι. There are two possible types of argumentation in which the case of Abraham is normative for both: (i) the first, in which it is necessary to show that Gen 17 does not render Gen 15 obsolete and which avoids establishing a link between the Law and curse; the choice made in Rom 4. (ii) The second, in which it is necessary to show that the Law, far from being necessary for obtaining the promised blessings, carries rather a curse. This is the way chosen by Paul in Gal 3:10-14.

### 2.1.2. Verses 10-12

The logic of these verses is in no way evident, as the differing interpretations show<sup>4</sup>. Thus, it may be useful to recall the two stages through which Paul passes: vv. 10-12 in which it is progressively affirmed that the Law cannot justify because no part of it is linked with faith, and vv. 13-14 in which it is said that Christ is the one who has liberated us from the curse of the Law. These two verses (vv. 13-14) are clearly necessary to the argumentation. Indeed, it does not suffice to say that the Law cannot justify (vv. 10-12), without indicating by whom or thanks to whom we are justified (vv. 13-14).

In these two stages, Paul's declarations are each time followed by a biblical statement confirming them:

Paul's statements	scriptural support
For all who rely on the works of the law are under a curse (v. 10a)	Deut 27:26
no man is justified before God by the law (v. 11a)	Hab 2:4
the law does not rest on faith (v. 12a)	Lev 18:5
Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law [...] (v. 13a)	Deut 21:23

<sup>4</sup> In addition to the practically exhaustive list given by M. BACHMANN, "Zur Argumentation von Galater 3.10-12", *NTS* 53 (2007) 524-544, also see a brief state of the question in MARGUERAT, "L'évangile paulinien".

## The statements of v. 10

Verse 9 said that those who rely upon faith are blessed with Abraham the believer. But the Jews consider that they also are believers and that their commitment to the Law earns for them the promised blessings. Thus, Paul must now show that this is not so.

The first reason, furnished in v. 10a, has drawn a lot of ink because its semantics are difficult<sup>5</sup>. What is meant by ὅσοι ἐξ ἔργων νόμου εἰσιν? Literally: “all those who are from works of the Law”, that Bibles or commentaries translate in different ways: “For all who rely on works of the law”<sup>6</sup>, “For all who depend on works of the law”<sup>7</sup>, and “those who rely on the keeping of the Law”<sup>8</sup>. First, let us dispense with the interpretation — fortunately less and less in vogue — according to which the verse is describing those who want to derive glory and value from their own works, conformed to the requirements of the Law; in addition to caricaturing the attitude of the faithful Jew, this reading cannot be recommended for an argumentation in which it is a question neither of pride nor of boasting. But commentators rightly compare the ἐξ ἔργων νόμου εἰσιν to the ἐκ πίστεως of Gal 3:7 and 9, to which it is contrasted<sup>9</sup>. The preposition ἐκ indicates origin (familial, ethnic, geographical, religious, etc.), and here the expression designates those who are defined on the basis of the same convictions, in other words, all those who, of Jewish origin or not<sup>10</sup>, make the observance of the Law<sup>11</sup> the principle of their re-

<sup>5</sup> J.M. SCOTT, “‘For as Many as are of Works of the Law are under a Curse’ (Ga 3,10)”, *Paul and the Scripture of Israel* (eds. C.A. EVANS – J.A. SANDERS) (JSNT Sup 83; Sheffield 1993) 205-228, has identified eight major interpretations and added his own. Also see PITTA, *Galati*, 183-186, and A.A. DAS, “Galatians 3:10. The Necessity of Perfect Obedience”, *Paul, the Law, and the Covenant* (Peabody, MA 2001) 145-170.

<sup>6</sup> RSV. Also DUNN, *Galatians*, 170, and many others.

<sup>7</sup> NAB.

<sup>8</sup> JB.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. A.M. BUSCEMI, *Lettera ai Galati*. Commentario esegetico (Studium Biblicum Franciscanum Analecta 63; Jerusalem 2004) and many others before him.

<sup>10</sup> The ὅσοι can include several groups, (a) the Jews, especially those who have refused to believe in Christ out of fidelity to the Law, (b) those Jews who are customarily called Judeo-Christians, (c) proselytes, (d) and those ethnic Christians who, without wanting to become proselytes, were desirous of obeying the Law.

<sup>11</sup> I have translated the phrase ἐργα νόμου, in some respects ambiguous, in this way because it can designate the commandments imposed by the Law or their execution, in other words, a lifestyle that conforms to this same Law, as the two readings of 4QMMT show. For the first (the commandments), see, for ex., M. BACHMANN, “4QMMT und Galaterbrief, מִשְׁנֵי הַתּוֹרָה und ΕΡΓΑ ΝΟΜΟΥ”, *ZNW* 89 (1998) 91-113, and for the second (lifestyle), J.C.R. DE ROO, “The Concept of ‘Works of the Law’ in Jewish and Christian Literature”, *Christian-Jewish Relations*



relationship with God and with man. For, Paul adds, they are all under a curse (ὕπὸ κατάραν εἶσιν). For a long time it has been noted that v. 10a is not declaring them cursed (ἐπικατάρατοι) but only under *the threat of* a curse, the reason being given by the scriptural passage (Deut 27:26 in v. 10b) that emphasizes this statement by radicalizing it. In order to know what Paul wants to say in v. 10a, it is thus important to examine the citation in v. 10b. These two statements form, if any of the commentators are to be believed, an enthymeme, in which Deut 27:26 would be the main premise and v. 10a the conclusion<sup>12</sup>, the missing premise being then inferred from the statements that are present<sup>13</sup>:

Premise 1 = v. 10b	(M) everyone who does not observe and obey all the things written in the book of the law (A) is cursed (Deut 27:26).
Premise 2 = missing	(B) All who rely on the works of the law (M) do not observe and obey all the things written in the book of the law.
Conclusion = v. 10a	(B) All who rely on the works of the law (A) are under a curse.

This syllogism raises some difficulties. That the Law is not obeyed by all is a fact denounced by the prophets; but some Jews, the Pharisee Saul having been one<sup>14</sup>, do exist who do not hesitate to declare themselves irreproachable, and thus cannot accept the missing premise<sup>15</sup>. Let us also note that for the biblical writings, the category of those who observe the Law is neither unreal nor utopic<sup>16</sup>. Then those, who in spite of all their efforts are unable to arrive at a total blamelessness,

*through the Centuries* (eds. S.E. PORTER – B.W.R. PEARSON) (JSNTSS 192; Sheffield 2000) 144: “[I]n 4QMMT, ‘works of the law’ refers to the obedient lifestyle of the good Israelite kings, their ‘fearing of the law’ and their ‘seeking of the law’, that is, their desire to know what God wanted them to do, and their ‘good deeds’. ‘Works of the law’ expresses all of these: fearing, seeking, and practicing the law; in short, it stands for living in obedience to God’s law”.

<sup>12</sup> V. 10a, which it is necessary to prove, is also called by some the *propositio* of the passage.

<sup>13</sup> Cf., for ex., DAS, “Galatians 3:10”, 146, that I am happy to cite, by changing the order of the logical components (A, B and M) in order to highlight better the form of the reasoning. In this syllogism of the first figure, the middle term (M), which is not found in the conclusion, is placed at the beginning of the first premise and at the end of the second; as such, the syllogism noted by Das does not belong to any of the four types always true, those in *barbara*, *celarent*, *darii* and *ferio*, which compels verifying the truth of each premise. Moreover, since (M) and (A) do not exactly correspond to each other from one statement to the other, the construction of the syllogism becomes problematic.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Gal 1:14b; Phil 3:6.

<sup>15</sup> In other words, premise 2 in the diagram.

<sup>16</sup> Cf., for ex., Ps 118/119:51, 61, 109; Qo 8:14; Sg 2:10, 12, 18; 4:7; 5:15; 10:20; Dan 13:3 LXX; Lk 1:6; 2:25. Also, all the affirmations of the Psalms in which the just are asked to praise, which clearly assumes their existence.



know how to rely upon the mercy and forgiveness of God, are convinced that they have a part in the blessings promised by God to those who love His Law. The Jew who wants to obey the Law thus excludes neither mercy nor forgiveness for failures and imperfections<sup>17</sup>. If the citation of Deut 27:26 declares cursed those who do not rigorously maintain all the commandments of the Law<sup>18</sup>, it is in order to emphasize the seriousness of the situation of all those for whom the Law is the rule of life: all transgression runs the risk of curse<sup>19</sup>; by taking up Deut 27:26 and giving it its maximum extension<sup>20</sup>, Paul is emphasizing its seriousness<sup>21</sup>.

What we have up to now highlighted can be summarized thus: (a) the Apostle begins by warning the practitioners of the Law that they must be fully faithful lest they run the risk of a curse. (b) The commandments to be practiced are not just the *boundary markers*<sup>22</sup> because the way in which the citation is repeated clearly shows that Paul is not considering only a list of commandments but *all of them*. (c) Verse 10 forms a rhetorical and demonstrative unit; thus, there is no need to connect it to v. 11a that, as will be seen, answers other questions. (d) Even by accepting that many have risked being cursed, v. 10 does not suffice as a proof because there are still those whose delight is in the Law of God, those that the

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Prov 24:16 (“for a righteous man falls seven times, and rises again”), all the post-exilic confessions of sin and of the later Psalms, such as Ps 102/103, according to which the first of all the divine benefits is forgiveness.

<sup>18</sup> Differing from the Greek, the Hebrew text of Deut 27:26 does not have the בל, but it is found in Deut 28:1, in the Greek and in the Hebrew: בל משהו and ποιεῖν πάσας τὰς ἐντολάς αὐτοῦ.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. MARGUERAT, “L’évangile paulinien”, 43, in which the formulation is correct: “A Potential curse hangs over the practice of the Law”. The expressions ὑπὸ κατάραν in v. 10a and ἐπικατάρατος in v. 10b are not equivalents. For this reason it is out of place to make them the same term (B) of a syllogism in *barbara* thus reconstructed: the major (10b) being composed of (M) and (B), the minor (v. 11a) of (A) and (M), and the conclusion (v. 10a), of (A) and (B), as Bachmann suggests (“Zur Argumentation”, 536-540, especially the diagram on p. 539) and others. If the ὑπὸ κατάραν in v. 10a and the ἐπικατάρατος in v. 10b are not equivalents, then the ὅσοι in v. 10a and the πᾶς ὁ in v. 10b do not have the same extension (since, according to the testimony of the Scriptures themselves, all the subjects of the Law are not cursed).

<sup>20</sup> It has been observed that, just like Deut 28:58, Deut 27:26 seems to refer only to the book of Deuteronomy. Cf., for ex., BACHMANN, “Zur Argumentation”, 527.

<sup>21</sup> An observation similar to that in Gal 3:10 is found in Jas 2:10: ὅστις γὰρ ὅλον τὸν νόμον τηρήσῃ πταίσῃ δὲ ἐν ἐνί, γέγονεν πάντων ἑνοχος.

<sup>22</sup> DUNN, *Galatians*, 172, for whom those aimed at in v. 10 are “those who, in his [Paul] judgment, were putting too much weight on the distinctiveness of Jews from Gentiles, and on the special laws which formed the boundary markers between them, those who rested their confidence in Israel’s ‘favoured nation’ status, those who invested their identity too far in the presumption that Israel was set apart from ‘the nations’ — including, of course, the Jewish Christians in view in 1:6-8 and 2:4.12”.

διὰ in order to avoid describing the Law as a means of justification — which, for him, it could not be. Either reading of ἐν νόμῳ still raises some difficulties. With the first (“in the Law”), it is necessary to conclude that no subject of the Law, even the one who does it well, can be justified or become righteous. But such a conclusion goes directly against all the biblical passages — a short list has been given above — in which the subjects of the Law are declared righteous. Saying that no subject of the Law can be righteous before God is thus going against the very word of God. If one chooses the other reading, according to which no one becomes righteous before God by means of the Law, that is to say, putting into practice the divine commandments, the difficulty is the same: a number of biblical writings, as has been seen, say the opposite.

As the declaration in v. 11a seems to be contradicted by the facts and by the divine word itself, Paul must absolutely find in the Scriptures a text declaring that no one is righteous before God by an act conforming to the Law. He would have been able to repeat Ps 142/143:2 already appealed to by him in Gal 2:16, and whose universal extension shows that it is also valid for the subjects of the Law: “no one [in Gal: *πᾶσα σάρξ*] would be justified before him [God]”. But he has preferred to use Hab 2:4: ὁ δίκαιος ἐκ πίστεως ζήσεται, a citation that has drawn lots of ink because it corresponds neither to the Hebrew nor to the Greek<sup>25</sup>. Without getting into a discussion on the formulation that Paul gives to the text of Habakkuk, let us only say that in order to know if the ἐκ πίστεως must be connected to the subject or to the verb, it suffices here to place it side by side with the following citation from Lev 18:5:

Hab 2:24	ὁ δίκαιος	ἐκ πίστεως	ζήσεται
Lev 18:5	ὁ ποιήσας αὐτὰ	ἐν αὐτοῖς	ζήσεται

The two citations are composed of three parts, each having the same function, respectively, even if, in the preceding diagram, the ἐν αὐτοῖς does not have the same place as in Gal 3:12 and Lev 18:5; and since this phrase modifies the verb (“to live in/by them”), it must be the same for ἐκ πίστεως in Gal 3:11b: “The righteous will live out of faith”. Verse 11 then becomes clearer: no one can be justified by the practice of the Law because it is faith that makes them righteous. One sees where Paul wants to go: if the just live by faith, there is no reason for becoming subject to the Law in order to be righteous; the believers coming from the Gentile world thus do not need to be circumcised and become Jews since justification comes to them by faith.

<sup>25</sup> The problem is the same in Rom 1:17b.

The citation of Hab 2:4, nevertheless, raises another difficulty because the observant Jew confesses it is faith that causes him to live, even better, that it is his faith that leads him to desire to observe the Law and thus respond to the divine will. From then on, the citation of Habakkuk can also describe the Jew for whom the practice of the Law has for its goal manifesting faith and making it operable. In other words, if v. 11 means that only faith makes one righteous in the eyes of God, it alone does not overturn the situation of those who are committed to the Law. The citation of Habakkuk is valid *a fortiori* for the subjects of the Law whose behavior is not irreproachable and who live from God's forgiveness; they know they are unable to be righteous by their own works and place themselves at God's mercy: it is faith in His forgiveness that gives them life. In short, the citation from Habakkuk can be applied to those who are committed to the Law, whether they observe it faithfully or not, because their behavior is rooted in the faith in this God who reveals to them His will by giving them the power to accomplish it and/or because they believe that it is forgiveness that gives them life and hope for salvation.

Verse 10 declared that those who are committed to the Law are under the threat of a curse; v. 11 goes further since it adds that it is faith and not the observance of the Law that makes one righteous. That is why it constitutes a distinct stage in the development of the argumentation and must first be analyzed alone. But it does not dispense with the question of the necessity of passing through/by the Law. That is why Paul is now going to have to impart that the system of the Law is not founded on faith.

### The Statements of v. 12

Without any doubt, v. 12a (ὁ νόμος οὐκ ἔστιν ἐκ πίστεως) goes further than 10a and 11a because it clearly means that the system of the Law is not a way of salvation and that the believers coming from the Gentile world do not have to be circumcised and become subjects of this Law in order to inherit the blessings promised to Abraham the believer. If faith alone justifies, without the Law, it is actually useless to go through the Law. But since the validity of v. 12a comes from the implicit citation that accompanies it (Lev 18:5), it is important to examine the latter more closely.

Lev 18:5 is also cited in Rom 10:5, and commentators rightly note that this verse from Leviticus<sup>26</sup> is representative of Jewish spirituality that at no time ever interpreted it negatively. God asks those of His people to keep His commandments because by putting them into practice, they will live: for the Jew, the only condition

<sup>26</sup> The reading of Gal 3:12b (ὁ ποιήσας αὐτὰ ζήσεται ἐν αὐτοῖς) is very close to that of Lev 18:5 LXX (ἃ ποιήσας ἄνθρωπος ζήσεται ἐν αὐτοῖς).

for living is to do the will of God. Coupled with that of Hab 2:4, this citation can only be interpreted by the subjects of the Law as a way of making their faith concrete because the latter is expressed in the observance of the commandments. Has Paul misunderstood the meaning of Lev 18:5 and in so doing provided a weapon to use against him?

A reading in total opposition to that of the pious Jew is also possible: Paul could be contrasting Hab 2:4 and Lev 18:5<sup>27</sup>. Having Lev 18:5 preceded by Hab 2:4 would lead to “disqualifying the text from Leviticus”, and more widely “to disqualify theologically a word from the Torah through a prophetic word”<sup>28</sup>. But the function of a *gezerah shawah* was never to oppose two passages of the Scriptures<sup>29</sup>. So what is it? It is to explain a scriptural passage with the help of another in order to resolve apparent contradictions within the Torah or between the Torah and the Prophets, the semantic unity of the Scriptures being the principle that authorizes connecting the passages. How, for Paul, do Lev 18:5 and Hab 2:4 reciprocally illuminate each other? Each one is describing a different system: Hab 2:4 characterizes that of faith, in which the believer totally submits to God without wanting nor being able to get on his own what he hopes for, whereas Lev 18:5 evokes the system of the Law, which requires specific behaviors and judges the result of them. The subject of the Law is responsible for the result of his behavior, whereas the believer awaits all from the One to/in whom he believes. Faith and the Law are thus two very different principles. In light of these considerations, Paul’s argument, which apparently is based solely on the absence of the words πίστις and δίκαιος/δικαιοσύνη in Lev 18:5, must not be judged too quickly or superficially. Because if Lev 18:5 correctly describes the system of the Law, then the absence of πίστις in this summary confirms the heterogeneity of the two principles: ὁ νόμος οὐκ ἐκ πίστεως.

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<sup>27</sup> Cf. MARGUERAT, “L’évangile paulinien”, 44-45.

<sup>28</sup> MARGUERAT, “L’évangile paulinien”, 45. Even though the author has recognized that Paul is using a *gezerah shawah*, its role is never to discredit one biblical passage by another but rather to interpret one passage by connecting it with the other. On this subject and the function of the technique, which is to resolve apparent contradictions in the Torah (or even between the latter and the prophetic books), see J.N. ALETTI, “Romans 4 and Genesis 17. The Importance of the Gezerah Shawah”, *New Approaches for Interpreting the Letters of Saint Paul*. Collected Essays (Subsidia Biblica 43; Rome 2012); P. BASTA, *Gezerah Shawah*. Storia, forme e metodi dell’analogia biblica (Subsidia Biblica 26; Roma 2006); M. RASTOIN, *Tarse et Jérusalem*. La double culture de l’Apôtre Paul en Galates 3:6-4:7 (AnBib 152; Rome 2003) 94-144.

<sup>29</sup> In order for the two passages to be connected, it is necessary that they have at least one word in common (here the verb ζήσεται), that the form of this word is rare enough, and that the respective context of the two passages is analogous, in order to avoid all semantic anarchy. Here, it would take too long to question in detail the pertinence of the *gezerah shawah* of Gal 3:11-12.

The passive perfect participle *κεκατηραμένος* has become a verbal adjective, *ἐπικατάρατος*, and the word *θεός* is omitted: its absence stems from Paul clearly wanting to avoid saying that God had cursed Jesus, His Son. And since the passive participle could have also been interpreted as a theological passive, it has been replaced by the adjective, which is the counterpart to the same adjective in v. 10b and forms with it a *gezerah shawah* to which we are going to return. Let us first note that *ἐπικατάρατος* indicates how to understand the substantive *κατάρα* in v. 13a. This statement is amphibological: what is meant by “[Christ has] become for us a curse”? The word *κατάρα* can designate the action of cursing itself or its cause or even its result<sup>30</sup>. Paul certainly does not want to say that Jesus is the cause of a curse — the following verse says the opposite, namely, by him we have received the blessing. He can be its object or recipient, and if Paul is utilizing the substantive, it is in order to indicate that all curses, in number and in force, have in some way fallen upon him<sup>31</sup>. The Apostle could very well have been able to say that only Christ was able to free humanity from the curse without having to add that he had become a curse and without citing Deut 21:23 because he could not be cursed by God, he the Innocent One par excellence. By what then was he cursed? By the Law, as declared in v. 13a<sup>32</sup>. Why then has Paul thought it good to recall, using an exaggeration that is found elsewhere in his writings, that dying hung from wood, Jesus became a curse? Indeed, one encounters the same type of exaggeration and metonymic turn in 2Cor 5:21: “he made him to be sin who knew no sin [...]”<sup>33</sup>. A brief glance at the *gezerah shawah* by which Deut 27:26 and 21:23 have been connected is going to permit answering several questions left hanging.

#### The *gezerah shawah* in v. 10b and v. 13b

Was Paul right in connecting Deut 27:26 and 21:23? Actually, it is not a question of a *gezerah shawah* in the strict sense, to the extent that the two verses do not have the common word *ἐπικατάρατος*: we have seen above that the adjective is found in Deut 27:26; Deut 21:23 instead uses a passive perfect participle. This being said, the root is the same since both come from the same verb *ἐπικαταράσσειν*. The difficulty comes from elsewhere. Indeed, in order to be valid, a *gezerah shawah*

<sup>30</sup> The turn is metonymic.

<sup>31</sup> A metonymic substantive may designate the action itself, its cause (“this man is kindness itself”) or its effect (in Italy, to call someone “Amore!”).

<sup>32</sup> Errors excepted, the expression “cursed by the Law” or its equivalent has no other biblical or Jewish intertestamentary (Qumran, etc.) occurrence.

<sup>33</sup> On this passage and its theological force, cf. ALETTI, “God Made Christ to be Sin (2 Corinthians 5:21)”, 191-214.

can only connect verses having a similar context and orientation, which is the case in Deut 27:26 and 21:23, in which the one dead on the cross is declared cursed only for a serious sin: in the Hebrew and the Greek, the curse pronounced in v. 23 is connected to an infraction that actually merited death. For, by applying the verse to Christ, who has committed no sin, *a fortiori* a sin having merited death on the cross, Paul seems to agree completely with those who accuse Jesus of blasphemy and rebellion<sup>34</sup> — the argument would then be doubly counter-productive. What is more, by apparently not respecting the context and the motivation of Deut 21:23, he seems to be removing the *raison d'être* from the *gezerah shawah*...

Paul's argument is actually more probative than it would appear. Because if Jesus was able to be declared cursed by *the Law*, by death on the cross, this would mean that the latter is incapable of saving the innocent from a curse. That an innocent be hung and die on a cross like a blasphemer and a rebel indicates that the Law can be used contrary to its purpose, which is to protect the innocent and condemn the guilty. The paradox is brought to its extreme when the one who is put on the cross and declared cursed in the name of the Law is the same one by whom we receive blessing. Thus, no one is sheltered from the curse of the Law, not even the innocent! Moreover, that the Law has been utilized to condemn the Innocent *par excellence* signifies that it has manifested its radical weakness.

One could still object that notwithstanding the most severe punishments, Israel was never cursed by God because of the promises but also because of the procedures of conversion laid down by the Law itself: penitential ceremonies, fasts, sacrifices for sin, etc. If Deut 27:26 says that a potential curse threatens all those who are committed to the Law, this same Law furnishes the procedures to avoid it. Indeed, but the most recent reading of the prophetic books and the Jewish intertestamentary writings confirm Paul's interpretation: for all time and up to the threshold of the Christian era, such a threat was taken seriously, as is shown by the increase in sacrifices for sin and the appeal to the divine mercy still more pressing<sup>35</sup>.

Deut 21:23 signals not only the paradoxical truth of Deut 27:26, namely that every subject of the Law runs the risk of a curse and that the Law itself is powerless to deliver anyone from a curse, but it also allows highlighting one of the paradoxes Paul frequently maintains: it is at the moment in which the situation seems the most desperate, since the Son of God has been declared cursed by the Law, that a fundamental reversal takes place. Was such an extreme passage necessary?

<sup>34</sup> For blasphemy, see Mat 26:25, Mark 14:64; and rebellion, Luke 23:5.

<sup>35</sup> Cf., for ex., R.J. BAUTCH, *Developments in Genre between Post-Exilic Penitential Prayers and the Psalms of Communal Lament* (Academia Biblica 7; Atlanta, GA 2003), who principally presents three passages from the Hebrew Bible: Isa 63:7–64:11; Esd 9:6–15; Neh 9:6–37. One should not forget the supplication of Azariah in Dan 2 (Greek); 11QS 24; etc.



If the Apostle's affirmations are strong — God made sin he who knew no sin, he has accepted that the Innocent died as one cursed and rejected — they are never followed by explanations or justifications. The paradox remains a paradox, even if its purpose is indicated each time: it is for us (ὕπὲρ ἡμῶν) that it was so.

It is important now to emphasize the coherence of an argumentation that in the beginning we said remained a *vexata quaestio*. If it is true that v. 13 is connected to v. 10, by signaling how far the Law's power of curse has gone, but also and above all by stating the radical change that took place by the mediation of Christ, as the following table diagrams:

v. 10a	declaration by Paul	For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse
v. 10b	justification by citation	"Cursed be every one who does not abide by all things written in the book of the law, and do them".
v. 13a	declaration by Paul	Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us
v. 13b	justification by citation	"Cursed be every one who hangs on a tree".

then why does Paul not directly pass from v. 10 to v. 13, which in principle the *gezerah shawah* authorizes doing? Because if he went directly from v. 10 to v. 13, the radical powerlessness of the Law would not have been truly established. By itself, indeed, the external *gezerah shawah* (Deut 27:26 and 21:23) only proves that the Law brings with it the threat of curse and that no one, including the innocent, has a refuge, but it does not show that it is necessary to leave the Mosaic system in order to obtain the blessing because the book of Deuteronomy itself says that whoever desires to observe the Law and does observe it obtains the blessing<sup>36</sup>. If the subjects of the Law are not all cursed, then Christ delivers only the others from the curse. If Paul had not shown in vv. 11-12 the powerlessness of the Law to justify, those who faithfully obey the Law would have been able to reply that by the Law they are assured of justification, that they have no need of it in/by Jesus Christ — justification being reserved for those who are not under the Law or who, being under the Law, are not able to claim to be righteous because of their negative behavior. It was thus necessary to show in advance (i) the radical incapacity of the Law to justify and (ii) the unique role of faith for obtaining justification — the two points made thanks to the internal *gezerah shawah* in vv. 11-12. In short, the logic of the argumentation in Gal 3:6-14 truly exists. Thus, there is no need to despair finding it because, by the sequence of the *gezerah shawah*, it progressively becomes recognizable.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. Deut 28:1-14; Ps 1; Ps 119; Ps 128; etc.



### The Liberation of the Subjects of the Law and Its Universal Purpose

In v. 13a, Paul laconically declares: “Christ redeemed<sup>37</sup> us from the curse of the law”. That Christ is the author of our liberation, Paul says numerous times and in many ways. What is, on the other hand, here original and is not found elsewhere in the Apostle’s letters is the affirmation concerning the liberation from the curse of the Law. But who then must be delivered from the curse of the Law: only its subjects, the Jews, or, with them, even those who were not under its power, the Nations? In short, who is the ἡμᾶς in v. 13a designating: only the Jews, among whom Paul ranked, or all of humanity? The pronoun could designate only those who were under the system of the Law. Indeed, one does not see why those who were not subjects of the Law would run the risk of a curse destined only for those who were its subjects, as is explicitly made known in the series of curses in Deut 27. Moreover, the passage has a parallel in Gal 4:4-6, which strongly invites seeing designated in the ἡμᾶς of Gal 3:13a only the subjects of the Law. In the following table, the order of the phrases has been changed in the left-hand column to highlight the parallel elements:

Gal 3:13-14	Gal 4:4-5
γενόμενος ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν κατάρρα	[Χριστὸν] γενόμενον ὑπὸ νόμον
Χριστὸς ἡμᾶς ἐξηγόρασεν	ἵνα τοὺς ὑπὸ νόμον ἐξαγοράσῃ
ἵνα εἰς τὰ ἔθνη ἡ εὐλογία 'Αβραάμ γένηται	ἵνα τὴν υἰοθεσίαν ἀπολάβωμεν

In Gal 4:5, the liberation of the subjects of the Law has as an immediate corollary — the filial adoption of all humans, and the same logic is applied to Gal 3:13-14. These two reasons militate in favor of the pronoun ἡμᾶς designating the Jews and those who appeal to the authority of the Law. It is because the subjects of the Law have been liberated from the curse of this same Law that the blessing promised to Abraham can be joined to the Nations. Indeed, because the Law has at last appeared as incapable of justifying, the Nations no longer need to believe that it was by becoming its subjects — in other words, by becoming Jews — that one could receive the justification and the blessings promised to the Patriarch — the substantive υἰοθεσία in Gal 4:5 being the equivalent of ἡ εὐλογία τοῦ 'Αβραάμ in Gal 3:14.

Being somewhat elliptical, these verses of Gal 3 raise a final question. If Christ has delivered its coreligionists from the curse of the Law, is it so that they will be

<sup>37</sup> Since this essay is not specifically linguistic, the reader should consult the commentaries, all prolix, on the Pauline meaning and usage of the verb ἐξαγοράζειν that here unmistakably can be translated “to liberate”.

- vv. 25-29, in which the situation of the justified believers, who are sons and heirs, is stated.

### 1. Gen 15 and Gen 17 – Some Difficulties

The opening of v. 15, “To give a human example”<sup>1</sup> (RSV), shows that the proofs are no longer going to rely upon the Scriptures as in vv. 10-14 but are going to have recourse to human experience, that of the Greco-Roman right of succession of the time, an experience known to the Galatians.

It is impossible to know whether or not the example chosen by Paul was perfectly understood by the Galatians. Today, commentators question the type of disposition to which the verse is referring: a treaty or a will, according to the Jewish law or according to the Greek/Roman law?<sup>2</sup> Because if it is alluding to the disposition made by a testator — in Greek, διαθήκη, a generic term that in the translation of the LXX refers to a will as well as to a treaty of alliance<sup>3</sup> —, Paul’s formulation, “no one annuls a man’s will, or adds to it, once it has been ratified” (RSV), must be accompanied by details: if the testator is in good health — and thus is not dying — and if during his lifetime, he bequeaths his assets to his children, according to the law of the time, his will only goes into effect at his death because no one, *except for himself*, is able to modify it as long as he, the testator, is living. As commentators point out, the annulment of a will, the addition of codicils, indeed, the writing of another will frequently happened<sup>4</sup>. With R. Penna<sup>5</sup>, one understands this verse thus: no one, *other than the testator*, is able to annul a will or add anything to it once it has been put in force (after the death of the testator). The testator is thus able to modify the will as long as he lives, and as God cannot die, must one not conclude that He can modify the will/promise<sup>6</sup> made to Abraham as many

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<sup>1</sup> In Greek, κατὰ ἄνθρωπον λέγω. Unlike Gal 1:11, here the phrase κατὰ ἄνθρωπον does not have a negative denotation.

<sup>2</sup> According to J. MURPHY O’CONNOR, “The Irrevocable Will (Gal 3:15)?”, *RB* 106 (1999) 224-235, the passage is alluding only to the (Greek) right of adoption.

<sup>3</sup> In addition to the commentaries, one will find a very complete state of the question in B.S. JACKSON, “Why the Name New Testament?”, *Melilah Manchester Journal of Jewish Studies* 10 (2013) *passim*. On the reasons for which Paul calls the promise of Gen 15 will, one can consult recent commentaries, which provide all the information that one could want.

<sup>4</sup> On p. 204, n. 3, of his article, R. PENNA, “La promessa ad Abramo come Testamento irrevocabile secondo Gal 3,15ss”, *Theologica. Annali della Pontificia Facoltà teologica della Sardegna* III (Cagliari 1994) 203-218, mentions, with others, the case of Herod (JOSEPHUS, *Bel-lum*, I, 646.664.669; II, 20.35; II, 93-98).

<sup>5</sup> PENNA, “La promessa ad Abramo”, 210-213.

<sup>6</sup> Without a doubt it is good to recall that neither the substantive ‘promise’ (ἐπαγγελία) nor the verb ‘to promise’ (ἐπαγγέλλομαι) utilized by Paul are found in the five books of the Law.

times as He wants? Has He not done this in Gen 17? Moreover, it is only in that chapter — and not in Gen 15 — that the disposition wanted by God seems to become eternal, so that it could no longer be annulled or receive additions because it was so declared by God Himself — in Hebrew, בְּרִית עוֹלָם, in Greek, διαθήκη αἰώνιος (Gen 17:7). The question posed to the exegete is then simple: Does Gen 17 invalidate Paul's interpretation of Gen 15 as a definitive promise/will that is not modifiable? Before answering, let us note that even if the vocable *disposition* (διαθήκη) is the same in Gen 15 and 17, it does not denote the same type of relationship: in Gen 15:18, the promise is announced to Abraham<sup>7</sup>, but it is his descendants who will be the recipients of the object of this promise: “to your seed I will give this land”; in Gen 17:8, on the other hand, Abraham, along with his descendants, is its recipient: “I will give to you and to your seed after you this land”. The description of the relationship God wants to have with Abraham is different as well: if in Gen 15 it is really a question of an unconditional promise, in Gen 17 the διαθήκη resembles rather an agreement between God and Abraham. The reader indeed cannot but notice (i) the presence of the preposition *between* (in Greek: ἀνὰ μέσον, in Hebrew: בֵּין) that one finds in some agreements or treaties *between* two kings or two groups<sup>8</sup>, (ii) also the presence of a condition by which one enters into the διαθήκη, namely circumcision, (iii) lastly, the verb “to keep” (τηρεῖν) that in some writings from the Judaism of the Second Temple is several times applied to the observance of the Law<sup>9</sup>. Thus, from Gen 15 to Gen 17 one passes from one kind of *disposition* (διαθήκη) ‘promise’ to another, designated by the same substantive διαθήκη, but which actually resembles an ‘agreement’ *between* two persons or groups, an agreement carrying with it an obligation. And if in order to enter into the possession of the object (the homeland) it is necessary to practice circumcision, obedience to this commandment is determinative because as Paul stigmatizes it, the inheritance is then the reward for a behavior required by the Law (Gal 3:18). In short, unlike that of Gen 15, the *disposition* (διαθήκη) in Gen 17 does not resemble a promise, and Paul was correct in reading it differently.

But if, as Paul says, the divine disposition/promise of Gen 15 is definitive and cannot be changed, then could something like Gen 17 — repeated in Lev 12:3 — that aimed to modify it not come from God?<sup>10</sup> This is what the Apostle could mean in Gal 3:19, in which he says that the Law “was ordained (διαταγείς) by (διὰ) an-

<sup>7</sup> The verb and the substantive have the same root in Greek: διατιθέναι διαθήκην.

<sup>8</sup> Gen 31:44; 1Kgs 5:26; 15:19; 2Kgs 11:17; 2Chr 16:3; 23:16.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. the compound usage of συντηρεῖν + Law or commandments in Sir 15:15; 29:1; 35:1; 37:12; 44:20 (a verse mentioned above and according to which Abraham *kept* the Law).

<sup>10</sup> R. Penna's observation, “La promessa ad Abramo”, 205.

gels through an intermediary” (RSV). Actually, without going back on the immutability of the promise, Paul is declaring that the purpose of the Law was not to modify this promise but to be a pedagogue authorized to prepare the Israelites for the coming of their Messiah (Gal 3:24).

But when was the Law proposed for the first time? For the Apostle, it was at the time of the Exodus<sup>11</sup>, a position that was in opposition to that of the Judaism of his time, for which Abraham was the first to have obeyed the Law of God when he accepted the obligation of circumcision for himself and all his descendants (Gen 17:10-14)<sup>12</sup>. In Gal 3:17, the Apostle once again seems to forget or avoid commenting on this passage from Genesis that is directly opposed to his own position and susceptible to undermining his argumentation. He clearly knew how the Judaism of his time interpreted the figure of Abraham and his connection to the Law, but in Galatians, Paul is not proposing an exegesis of Gen 17:10-14. Let us anticipate our reading of Rom 4 and say that there Paul’s scriptural argumentation will be much more sound and will not leave its flank open to the objections that a Jew could make to those in Gal 3:10-14 and 3:15-25.

## 2. The Law Cannot Change the Promise (vv. 15-18)

### 2.1. *Galatians 3:16*

In Gal 3:16, Paul declares: “The promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring” (RSV). In the book of Genesis, God makes several promises to Abraham, and the following books add that He also made them to Isaac and Jacob, those who, with Abraham, are called the Fathers<sup>13</sup>. But since Gal 3 wants to show that the promises have preceded the Law, it is necessary to take a look at the promises made to Abraham before the commandment of Gen 17:10-14 to see if there is one in particular to which the Apostle refers. In the following table, the object of the promises are given horizontally and those who will be their beneficiaries vertically.

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<sup>11</sup> According to Gen 15:13, the Exodus took place four hundred years after Abraham, or according to Ex 12:40, 430 years. Josephus mentions the two datings (*Antiquitates*, I, 185 = 400 years; *Antiquitates*, II, 318 = 430 years). The rabbis figure it thus: thirty years between the covenant made with Abraham and the birth of Isaac (Gen 16:3; 21:5) and four hundred years from the birth of Isaac to the Exodus.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Sir 44:20; Targ. Onqelos and Neophyti 26:5.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Gen 50:24; Num 11:12; 14:23; Deut 6:18, 23; Jdg 2:1. The Greek verb is uniformly ὁμνῶ and the object of the promise, *the land* of Canaan (called for this reason ‘the land of promise’ in Heb 11:9).

<b>what? to whom?</b>	a great nation	the land	a son, descendants
to Abraham	Gen 12:2	Gen 15:7	Gen 15:4-5 Gen 17:4-6 (father of nations)
to your descendants		Gen 12:7 Gen 15:18 Gen 24:7	
to you, Abraham, and to your descendants		Gen 13:15 Gen 17:8	

The promises made to Abraham can be reduced to two: a land and descendants, which explains the plural ἐπαγγελίαι of Gal 3:16. As the table shows, several times God directly announced them, especially that of the land of Canaan, to the Patriarch, a repetition that clearly highlights the constant and firm will of God as well as the importance of the gift promised. And if Gal 3:16 speaks of promises, in the plural, it is in order to show that the time that preceded the Law is eminently that of the promises and that their object did not change. Gal 3:16 is referring to the whole of the divine oracles — Gen 12:2; 12:7; 15:4-5, 7, 18; etc., — rather than one particular passage.

This same verse emphasizes, on the other hand, the σπέρμα, singular, which designates the entirety of the descendants in general and not only one of them. So why emphasize the descendant who is Christ?<sup>14</sup> Without any doubt because, for a Jew, to belong to the descendants of Abraham is the equivalent of belonging to the people of Israel; this then is the equation: descendants = people of Israel. But for Paul, Christ's being Abraham's descendant implies that all are in him — and form a single body or a single reality (cf. Gal 3:28) — and by this fact belong to the same lineage. However, the verse does not proceed by exclusion: or Israel or those who are in Christ; it only implies that those who are in Christ, *circumcised or not*, belong to the descendants of Abraham and that it is their faith that makes them his descendants<sup>15</sup>.

## 2.2. Galatians 3:17

In v. 17 Paul reiterates his position on the promulgation of the Law as being very posterior to the promise. If the Apostle opts for the longest duration, 430 years, it is very probably so that the interval between promise and Law is as great

<sup>14</sup> According to some exegetes, the insistence of v. 16b on the singular “your offspring” is a parenthetical phrase aimed at a possible objection, indeed, already formulated, by the Judaizers.

<sup>15</sup> The idea will be explicitly asserted in Rom 4:11-12.

as it could possibly be<sup>16</sup>. But, by themselves, the 430 years change nothing in the structural connection between promise and Law because, as we have seen above, the difficulty actually comes from Gen 17:10-14, which has the characteristics of a commandment and can thus symbolize all the Law; indeed for Judaism, Gen 17:10-14 adds a codicil to the anterior promise(s) of Gen 12 and 15; if it does not modify its contents, it changes the conditions of obtaining it. Moreover, there are conflicting interpretations of Gen 17:10-14: for Judaism, the commandment of Gen 17:10-14 does not abrogate the promise — of a land and descendants —, but it adds a decisive condition to it, circumcision; in the eyes of Paul, on the contrary, the commandment of circumcision is neither essential nor optional for obtaining the object of the promise. And if he is so insistent on separating the promise from the Law it is because of the exclusive link that, according to him, exists between promise, faith and justification. But as we have already said above, in Gal 3, the proofs produced by the Apostle do not cancel out the Jewish position.

### 2.3. *Galatians 3:18*

Gal 3:18 provides the reason for the inheritance coming from the promise and not from the Law: “it was by (διὰ) a promise that God made his gift to Abraham” (NJB). For Paul, gratuitousness and promise are linked. To obtain the inheritance by (ἐκ) obedience to the Law would have been equivalent to earning it by behavior or merits. But the promises of Gen 15 imposed no condition on Abraham.

The development of Gal 3:15-18 is focused on the temporal break that places the Law at a distance from the promise. But we must not forget that what is at stake in this distancing is the justification of Abraham by faith alone — without the Law — in the divine promise.

## 3. **Why the Law? (vv. 19-24)**

### 3.1. *Galatians 3:19*

If the Law did not modify the promise and if, on the other hand, it is not an instrument of justification, then why was it promulgated? The causal meaning of χάριν (“because of transgressions”<sup>17</sup> RSV) seems to have to be excluded because transgressions assume that the Law exists already. There is the final meaning “with the view to (transgressions)” that is not any clearer. Is it necessary to understand:

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<sup>16</sup> Cf. PITTA, *Galati*, 206.

<sup>17</sup> In Greek, παραβάσεων. P<sup>46</sup> reads πράξεων. Clearly, the Law is given so that one behaves according to its dispositions; the vocable πράξεις well describes the regime of the Law as Paul understands it, but it is clearly a *lectio facilior*.



that was given directly, the Law was given indirectly through intermediaries and, therefore, is inferior<sup>22</sup>.

With these difficulties being more or less straightened out, it is now possible to bring out four components of the Law stated in the verse. The first recalls its purpose (v. 19b), the second, its limited duration (v. 19c), the third and fourth, the instrumental causes of its promulgation (v. 19de).

Commentators still wonder about the identity of the mediator (μεσίτης) mentioned at the end of the verse. For some, it is one of the angels just mentioned, but for the greater majority, it is Moses, the mediation thus being twofold: the angels representing God, and Moses, the people of Israel. And intertestamentary writings attest to the involvement of angels and Moses in the transmission of the Law<sup>23</sup>: Moses could have received the Law from the angels. Thus, Moses' reception of the Law from angels and the fact that God did not directly address the people when the Law was given is implicitly contrasted to the direct dialogue between God and Abraham at the time of the promise. All things considered, Paul's wanting God and the people to be at the greatest possible distance from each other at the reception of the Law, it seems more *ad rem* to understand the angels and the μεσίτης as distinct intermediaries<sup>24</sup>.

### 3.2. Galatians 3:20

All agree that v. 20 is clearly an enthymeme, and there have been attempts to formulate the missing link and solve its connection to v. 19 that it is to clarify. Here is one reconstruction of the enthymeme<sup>25</sup>:

major:	with one, there is no mediator,
minor:	but God is one (unique)
conclusion:	<i>Ergo</i> , the Law, prescribed with the help of a mediator, is inferior to the promise.

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<sup>22</sup> Cf. F. MUSSNER, *Der Galaterbrief* (HThK 9; Freiburg 1974) 249, widely repeated by all subsequent commentaries.

<sup>23</sup> For the angels, see JOSEPHUS, *Antiquitates*, XV, 136; Acts 7:53; Heb 2:2.

<sup>24</sup> MUSSNER, *Galaterbrief*, 247-250, and many others after him.

<sup>25</sup> MUSSNER, *Galaterbrief*, 249. The conclusion must have a form other than that stated by Mussner "with God there is thus no mediator", a conclusion that would clearly be contradicted by numerous biblical passages. However, one must recognize with Mussner that the connection of the Law to the promise is underlying Gal 3:20, otherwise, one cannot see how Gal 3:21 is connected to this verse.



The second proposition, “but God is one” (RSV), repeats word for word the *shema Israel*<sup>26</sup> and avers the unicity of God; some have seen in it not an exclusive affirmation concerning divinity — there is not another god —, but one that is inclusive concerning the recipients — He is the one God of all, *Jews and non-Jews*<sup>27</sup>. That God is the God of all, one will willingly admit, but this is not the point the verse is emphasizing. In v. 20, the comparison (in Greek, *synkrisis*) between Law and promise remains the recurrent theme of the passage that goes from Gal 3:15 to 3:29: Paul is now showing that because of its transmission through multiple parties, the Law is inferior to a promise announced directly to Abraham by God Himself.

### 3.3. Galatians 3:21

Then v. 21 returns explicitly to the promise/Law *synkrisis* and formulates a question: in light of the differences just expressed, can one say that the Law was promulgated against the promise? In other words: does the διαθήκη/treaty — that requires one or several mediators — replace the διαθήκη/will? The Apostle’s response is negative: “If the Law that was given had been capable of giving life, then certainly [saving] justice would have come from (ἐκ) the Law”<sup>28</sup> (NJB). The reason provided can be developed and explained thus: there cannot be an opposition between promise and Law because the latter does not give life — a declaration that seems to be contradicted by numerous statements from the Scriptures<sup>29</sup>. One will respond that for Paul the life of which these texts are speaking is not eternal life, which comes at the end of time and is also called resurrection. It is true that in the writings of Paul, the verb ζωοποιέω (“to give life”) connotes not the present physical life but the eschatological life, the deposit of which the believers receive

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Deut 6:4.

<sup>27</sup> R. BRING, “Der Mittler und das Gesetz. Eine Studie zu Gal 3,20”, *KuD* 12 (1966) 292-309.

<sup>28</sup> The Greek text in v. 21b: εἰ γὰρ ἐδόθη νόμος ὁ δυνάμενος ζωοποιῆσαι, ὅπως ἐκ νόμου ἂν ᾔν ἡ δικαιοσύνη. M. WINGER, “Unreal Conditions in the Letters of Paul”, *JBL* 105 (1986) 110-112, notes that this is actually the only unreal condition in the Pauline letters.

<sup>29</sup> Besides Lev 18:5, see, for ex., Deut 4:1; 30:16; Prov 6:23; Neh 9:9: “your ordinances, by the observance of which a man shall live” (RSV); Sir 17:11 and 45:5 where one encounters the phrase νόμος ζωῆς (“the law of life”); PsSolomon 14:2 “the Law which God commanded us that we [his People] might live”; Bar 4:1 “All who hold her [the Law] fast will live” (RSV). On the question, see F. AVEMARIE, *Tora und Leben. Untersuchungen zu Heilsbedeutung der Tora in der frühen rabbinischen Literatur* (TSAJ 55; Tübingen 1996). For MASCHMEIER, *Recht-fertigung*, the Pauline thesis is that the Law was given in order to give life, even if it did not give it in practical terms.

with the Holy Spirit<sup>30</sup>. Very well! But the reading of Gen 12 and 15 shows that the object of the promise made to Abraham was not eternal life: only descendants and a land in which to live throughout the ages. Once again, Paul is moving very quickly, and it is necessary to find and recover the statements that allow making sense of the argumentative sequence. The end of the verse clearly recalls what, for the Apostle, the Law cannot do: it cannot *justify*. And it is from the word δικαιοσύνη ('justice') that one can reconstruct the line of thinking because justification is the door that leads to salvation and to definitive, eternal life; for according to Paul, since justification cannot come by obedience to the Law but by faith alone, and that with Abraham faith is faith in the promise, the implicit logic in Gal 3:21 becomes more clear; it is clearly making a connection to the statements made in Gal 3:10-13. The content or the object of the promise is less important than what the promise promoted and what it led to for Abraham and his descendants, namely faith and justification.

### 3.4. Galatians 3:22

Verse 22 is then able to summarize the entire period that goes from the promulgation of the Law to the coming of Christ and define it as a period dominated by sin but, nevertheless, awaiting the fulfillment of the promise for the believers who are in Christ. Also in this verse, the phraseology is not the most limpid: "But the scripture (ἡ γραφή) has imprisoned all things under the power of sin (ὑφ' ἁμαρτίαν)" (NRSV). What is the substantive "the Scripture" designating: a specific passage from the Scriptures; the books of the Law, those that we today call the Pentateuch; all the Scriptures, "the Law and the Prophets", as was said then?<sup>31</sup> If one follows the Pauline usage, the singular could rather be designating one or some particular passages in which it is said that all are under the (power of) sin; the several citations scattered throughout Rom 3:10-18 illustrate the statement exactly; indeed, in Rom 3:9 Paul has already accused all humans, Jews and Greeks, of being under the power of sin (ὑφ' ἁμαρτίαν), and he supports his statements in the subsequent verses by citing several passages from the Scriptures denouncing the total corruption of all human beings<sup>32</sup>. If it is true that to be under the power of sin denotes

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<sup>30</sup> Cf. Rom 4:17; 8:11; 1Cor 15:22, 36, 45; 2Cor 3:6.

<sup>31</sup> See 2Mac 15:9; Mat 5:17; 7:12; 11:13; 22:40; Luke 16:16; 24:44; John 1:45; Acts 13:15; 24:14; 28:23.

<sup>32</sup> All the pagans in Rom 3:10b-12, a citation from Ps 13:1-2 LXX; all the Israelites in Rom 3:13-14, a citation from Isa 59:7-9; everyone, pagans and Israelites, in Rom 3:13-14, a citation from Ps 5:10 and 9:28 LXX. On these citations, see J.N. ALETTI, *God's Justice in Romans*. Keys for Interpreting the Epistle to the Romans (Subsidia Biblica 37; Rome 2010) 85-86. On the connection 'under Law'/'under Sin', see L. BELLEVILLE, " 'Under Law': Structural Analysis and the Pauline Concept of Law in Galatians 3.21 – 4.11", *JSNT* 26 (1986) 53-78.

an imprisonment, a radical incapacity to do the will of God, to be under the power of sin is then the equivalent of being a sinner. It is now possible to determine what Paul wants us to understand in Gal 3:22: *the promulgation of the Law was not able to deliver humanity from the power of sin*. This idea, which is not explicitly expressed, is clearly relying on the preceding argumentation, that of Gal 3:10–14; but it is now oriented positively because the initiative is said to come from God, who confined all beings under the power of sin. It was not done in order to crush them or to abandon them to their desperate situation but in order to allow the promise and faith that it created to arrive at their fulfillment in Christ.

Verses 23–24 explain in a parallel manner the two parts of v. 22, life under the power of the guardian (in Greek, παιδαγωγός) and the successive liberation, two periods that describe the function of the Law, negative in that it was not made to liberate its subjects but also positive because it prepared them for the economy to come, that of faith:

role of the Law	orientation and purpose
v. 23a imprisoned and guarded under the Law v. 24a the Law, our pedagogue until [...]	v. 23b until faith should be revealed v. 24b Christ (came); justification

### 3.5. Galatians 3:23

Beginning with v. 23, Paul alternates the pronouns ‘we’ and ‘you’. So what are these two pronouns designating? When he is speaking of those who were under the authority of the Law, Paul utilizes ‘we’, which causes the majority of commentators to say that this pronoun designates the Israelites of the past or Jews of his day with whom he identifies, and what the ‘you’ designates is the believers coming from the Gentile world. Some think, nevertheless, that the ‘we’/‘you’ alternation is purely rhetorical and that they both designate all human beings because “All human beings were caught under the Law’s power”<sup>33</sup>. The Jews/Gentiles distinction cannot, however, be eliminated from these verses because if the Gentiles were under the elements of the world (Gal 4:3 and 9) as well as “under the [power of] sin” (Gal 3:22), they were not “under [the power of] the Law”; moreover, later in Gal 4:4, the Jews/Gentiles distinction is pertinent because there one finds the same movement that was already encountered in Gal 3:13–14, and the importance of which we have shown above, because for Paul the liberation of Israel was the condition and the beginnings of that of the rest of humanity<sup>34</sup>.

<sup>33</sup> MARTYN, *Galatians*, 362.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. chap. IV, pp. 77–78.

the chosen metaphor, in other words, from the dual function of the pedagogue, at the same time a guardian charged with punishing and correcting but also preparing the family's son for his future social and moral life. For Paul, this was so for the Law, in its dual role of coercion as well as preparation<sup>36</sup>.

### 3.7. *Galatians 3:25*

Beginning in Gal 3:25 the argumentation arrives at its turning point and describes the coming of justification with its decisive effects: the liberation of the children and thanks to theirs, that of all. As suggested by one commentator<sup>37</sup>, the verses that go from Gal 3:23 to 4:7 describe the passage from one period to another, from servitude to liberty, from the Law to faith, in two parallel sequences that are not repetitive but rather are complementary, the first ending with Christ and the second with the Holy Spirit:

	<b>Gal 3:23-29 enslaved vs. children</b>	<b>Gal 4:1-7 heirs, minors vs. majors</b>
juridical example: minor sons; the earlier time	<sup>23</sup> Before faith came, we were imprisoned and guarded under the law until faith would be revealed.	<sup>1</sup> My point is this: heirs, as long as they are minors, are no better than slaves, though they are the owners of all the property; <sup>2</sup> but they remain under guardians and trustees until the date set by the father.
application of the example to the subjects of the Law; using WE; the passage from before to after	<sup>24</sup> Therefore the law was our disciplinarian until Christ came, so that we might be justified by faith. <sup>25</sup> But now that faith has come, we are no longer subject to a disciplinarian,	<sup>3</sup> So with us; while we were minors, we were enslaved to the elements of the world.  <sup>4</sup> But when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, <sup>5</sup> in order to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as children.
application to the ethnic Christians; using YOU; the present	for in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith. <sup>27</sup> As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. <sup>28</sup> There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus. <sup>29</sup> And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to the promise.	<sup>6</sup> And because you are children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" <sup>7</sup> So you are no longer a slave but a child, and if a child then also an heir, through God.

<sup>36</sup> On this point, see VANHOYE, *Galati*, 96-97.

#### 4. All Believers, Sons of God and Descendants of Abraham (vv. 25-29)

Paralleling the passages makes possible, moreover, understanding Paul's manner of proceeding: in these seemingly repetitive passages, he is proceeding by progressive clarifications, first utilizing elliptical examples that he then clarifies. Thus, in v. 25, the genitive absolute ἐλθούσης [δὲ] τῆς πίστεως ("[But] now that faith has come"), which personifies faith and describes it as representative of the time from the coming of Christ, finds its complement in Gal 4:4-5 because the time of faith is also that of the filial adoption received by and in Christ.

By saying that it is with the coming of Christ that the regime of the faith has begun, of course, Paul does not want to declare that there were not believers under the regime of the Law because Abraham was not the only believer: the prophets and the sages, all subjects of the Law, were also believers; otherwise, how can the existence and inspiration of their writings be explained? But although these believers were sons and descendants of Abraham, they were, nevertheless, according to Paul, under the guard of the Law and remained in slavery. It could have only been without their realizing it, otherwise, how could they have been able to sing in the Psalms and elsewhere that the Law was for them happiness, light and a guide? Here again the Apostle is expressing his position without taking the trouble to explain it in detail, and a Jewish reader will assuredly think that it is caricaturally describing the role of the Law.

If there is little theoretical development in the argumentation of these verses, it is because what is expressed principally refers to the experience of Christians, especially the ethnic Christians, to what they have received by their faith. And it is this experience that the verses that go from Gal 3:26 to 4:7 describe.

##### 4.1. Galatians 3:26

The principle affirmation of Gal 3:26 concerns the ethnic Christians, who became sons by faith. Because it is faith alone — *id est*, without becoming subjects of the Law, thus Jews — that made them children of God<sup>38</sup>.

<sup>37</sup> An arrangement highlighted by C.H. COSGROVE, *The Cross and the Spirit. A Study in the Argument and Theology of Galatians* (Macon 1988) 69, and repeated by PITTA, *Galati*, 217.

<sup>38</sup> Since this essay is not an exegetical commentary, one will understand that it does not question all the difficulties with Paul's Greek. But as the formulation of Gal 3:26 touches upon the question of the faith/Christ connection, it is useful to look at it briefly. In Greek, the syntactical order is the following: πάντες γὰρ υἱοὶ θεοῦ ἐστε διὰ τῆς πίστεως ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ. Is it a question of an act of believing in Jesus Christ or of the faith of those who are in Jesus Christ — the equivalent of 2Tim 1:13 and 3:15; would one then read διὰ τῆς πίστεως τῆς ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ? Elsewhere in his letters, the Apostle never speaks of faith having Jesus Christ

The importance of vv. 26-29 cannot be minimized because by proceeding in stages they arrive at correlating the two different and essential statuses for the ethnic Christians. Before presenting each verse in relation to justification, a brief description of the sequence allows seeing where Paul wants to go.

First, he recalls that the ethnic Christians have become sons of God by faith (v. 26), he then demonstrates that integrated and included into Christ by Baptism, they form with the Judeo-Christians a unique whole (vv. 27-28), he can then declare that thus being one (unique body) in Christ, who is the offspring (σπέρμα) of Abraham (cf. Gal 3:16), they themselves are also from the lineage of the Patriarch and thus his heirs (v. 29). Filiation and inheritance have thus been obtained by the ethnic Christians without their having needed to become subjects of the Law.

Having highlighted these stages, what remains is to examine more closely the expressions and phrases that are of interest to our subject.

#### 4.2. *Galatians 3:27*

Gal 3:27 passes, without transition, from faith (son of God by faith) to Baptism: “As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ”<sup>39</sup>. How to explain this shift? As we pointed out above, the Apostle wants to arrive at showing that all believers, especially the non-Jews (or ethnic Christians), form a unique reality in Christ and that being in Christ they become sons and heirs. But before getting to this point, he mentions Baptism, by which the believer is incorporated into Christ, becomes a member of his body and forms a unique body with the other baptized. In order to signify that Baptism not only brings Christ closer, as close as that relationship may be, Paul does not utilize the preposition *πρός* that signifies proximity but *εἰς* that indicates “an entrance into”. Being baptized into (*εἰς*) Christ signifies as well that by Baptism the believers enter into (the body of) Christ and form one single reality. Rather than say that Baptism causes entry into the (ecclesial) body of Christ, which could still denote a distance, Paul utilizes the imagery of clothing: Baptism causes entrance into the clothing that is Christ. The metaphor could lead one to believe that Christ remains at the surface,

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as an object by accompanying the substantive *πίστις* with the preposition *ἐν*; Gal 2:16 shows, in fact, that if he had wanted to speak of faith having Jesus Christ as an object, Paul would have utilized the preposition *εἰς* in 3:26. The following reading for Gal 3:26 is that of the NRSV: “for in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith”; it could be contested because it connects the final phrase *ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ τοῦ υἱοῦ Θεοῦ ἔστε* and not to *διὰ τῆς πίστεως* as if there were a *hyperbaton*, a figure of speech that Paul utilizes very rarely, unlike Josephus.

<sup>39</sup> In Greek, ὅσοι γὰρ εἰς Χριστὸν ἐβαπτίσθητε, Χριστὸν ἐνεδύσασθε.



and the relationship, only skin-deep, superficial. If today clothes are no longer representative of one's social (jeans are worn by everyone) or sexual (women today wear pants) membership, they were at the time Paul was writing. Clothes were the principle sign of social and sexual identity. During the baptismal ceremony, in order to represent that Baptism was the instrument of this change in identity, those who had been baptized were re-clothed with a new outfit upon their leaving the baptismal water. In short, Baptism causes passing from multiplicity to unicity, and the Apostle is going to show all its implications in the following verse (v. 28).

#### 4.3. Galatians 3:28

The secondary literature on Gal 3:28 is copious. Exegetes have examined the verse in all its dimensions. Repeating their analyses here is clearly excluded, but what is called for is to see how this verse advances the question of justification.

οὐκ ἔστι Ἰουδαῖος οὐδὲ Ἕλλην, οὐκ ἔστι δοῦλος οὐδὲ ἐλεύθερος, οὐκ ἔστι ἄρσεν καὶ θήλυ· πάντες γὰρ ὑμεῖς εἰς ἓστε ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ.	There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.
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Today it is accepted that Paul is taking up a *topos*<sup>40</sup> that is found in many Jewish authors of the intertestamentary period as well as in pagan authors. Among the latter, the most frequently cited text is taken from the life of Thales by Diogenes Laertius<sup>41</sup>,

ἔφασκε [Socrates] γάρ, φασί, τριῶν τούτων ἕνεκα χάριν ἔχειν τῇ Τύχῃ πρῶτον μὲν ὅτι ἀνθρώπος ἐγενόμην καὶ οὐ θηρίον, εἶτα ὅτι ἀνὴρ καὶ οὐ γυνή, τρίτον ὅτι Ἕλλην καὶ οὐ βάρβαρος.	for he [Socrates] used to say (that) because of these three things he was grateful to Fortune: “first, that I was born a human being and not one of the animals; next, that I was born a man and not a woman; thirdly, a Greek and not a barbarian”.
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From Jewish writers, it is *Berakot* 7:18 that is most often cited:

ברוך שלא עשני אשה שאין אשה חייבת במצוות	Blessed [are You] who did not make me a woman, for there is no woman bound to the commandments
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If these two passages are posterior to Gal 3:28, they themselves seem, nevertheless, to be repeating an anterior *topos*. The elements retained by Diogenes Laertius

<sup>40</sup> The traits that Gal 3:28 have in common with those enumerated by Diogenes Laertius seem to prevent seeing in the Pauline formulation the repetition of a baptismal formula.

<sup>41</sup> *Vitae Philosophorum*, I, 33.10–34.1.



are closer to Paul's, but what these two texts have in common are statements made by males who are proud of being so. For the Socrates of Diogenes, the most beautiful gift is to be a Greek male, and for the pious Jew, the blessing is to be an Israelite male, a member of the chosen people, and because it is an honor, one must obey all the commandments of the Law. Paul takes up the *topos* from a totally different perspective, not to rejoice in different sources of privilege but to indicate that in Christ religious and social origins as well as sexual differences are not pertinent and that the discriminations that they have up to then engendered have no *raison d'être*. For the three pairs mentioned by Paul refer to the fundamental types of identifying relationships: religious (Jew/Greek), social (free/slave) and sexual (male/female).

The reader will have noted that Gal 3:28 is formed from two parts, the first accentuated by negatives (neither Jew nor Greek, neither slave nor free man, neither male nor female), and the second, positive, in which universality becomes unicity in Christ. Even if he is declaring the discriminations linked to religious, social, and sexual differences to be ecclesially not pertinent, he is not, however, going so far as to ask for the disappearance of these differences: in the communities founded by Paul, slaves remain slaves, and free men, free; and if the Apostle energetically rejects the circumcision of ethnic Christians, he does not preach social revolution nor militate for the equality of the sexes. Although indirectly denouncing the fundamental inequalities, Paul is not proposing another social model; he is only emphasizing that being-in-Christ has consequences, especially for the relationship between ethnic and Judeo-Christians: in Christ all have the same dignity of sons/daughters and brothers/sisters. Thus, the status of ethnic Christians is not inferior to that of the Judeo-Christians; this is one of the major effects of justification.

Gal 3:28 is also instructive for another reason because it indirectly points out one of the collective effects of justification, which consists not only in an individual transformation but also in an integration or insertion into Christ, in other words, along with other Pauline categories, into the body of Christ. Undoubtedly, one of the main challenges of the first communities was for there to be unity between the ethnic and Judeo-Christians, the latter having to recognize that the former had received the Spirit, the beginnings of the eschatological inheritance, in the same way and to the same extent as they had.

#### 4.4. Galatians 3:29

Verse 29 shows another consequence of justification and the filiation that it has brought about, namely that being sons and daughters of God, the believers, especially the ethnic Christians, are also Abraham's descendants (sons/daughters). But will one say, why return to Abraham? Is he no longer important and is it not

more dignified to be sons/daughters of God in Christ? Let us not forget that it is to the descendants of Abraham that the eschatological blessings were promised. Thus, Paul must recall this connection that he has already shown, beginning in Gal 3:16, in a sequence that is easy enough to follow:

- the recipients of the promise are Abraham and his descendants,
- and, Christ is the descendent of Abraham,
- and all believers in Christ are ONE (ἐἷς) in him and thus made part of the descendants,
- the ethnic Christians are thus a part of the descendants of Abraham,
- they have, moreover, received the Holy Spirit, the beginnings of the eschatological blessings.

The verse thus suggests that between the ethnic Christians and Abraham, faith created a link stronger than physical circumcision and that the latter is not necessary for belonging to Abraham's family — faith alone determines membership, causes entry into the family of God and, from there, into Abraham's<sup>42</sup>.

### **5. The Holy Spirit, the Beginnings of the Believers' Inheritance (Gal 4:1-7)**

After having recalled that the ethnic Christians are son/daughters of God in Christ, Paul continues his reflection by declaring that they are for this reason heirs, and having received the Holy Spirit, they already have all that is necessary for them. In spite of the difficulties of some statements, the linearity of the argumentation of Gal 3:15-29 is not in doubt. After having shown in Gal 3:10-14 that the Law and faith formed two systems that excluded each other and that justification came only from faith alone, Paul had to explain the Law's origin and function during the time from its promulgation to the coming of Christ. Paul then contrasts the Law's temporary function as pedagogue to faith's, which is definitive and came with/by Christ. By faith and the justification in which it results, the believers became sons and heirs.

In the preceding chapter, we have pointed out the parallelism that exists between Gal 3:13-14 and Gal 4:4-5. In each passage, the work of God happens thanks to the mediation of Christ who, having become man — and a subject of the Law, condemned as a blasphemer in the name of the Law —, has freed the subjects of the Law and thereby has opened the eschatological blessings to the Nations. But what relationship does Paul establish between these statements on

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<sup>42</sup> Let us add that for the Jew of this time, genealogy and thus physical and ethnic membership was not sufficient: faith and obedience to the Law were essential.

Christ's mediation and those on justification by faith alone? For two types of affirmations alternate in Gal 3:15–4:7:

- in Gal 3:22 and 25-26, justification (the passage from the state of being a sinner to that of being just) came by faith,
- and in Gal 3:27 and 4:4-5, redemption (freedom from sin) came by Christ's mediation.

These two types of affirmations go together, even if Paul does not clarify how he sees their connection. Exegetes for whom the phrase πίστις Χριστοῦ is designating Christ's fidelity, think that it is in v. 22 that the link between πίστις and Christ's mediation is stated. One such reading assumes an antanaclasis, with Paul playing on the word πίστις as fidelity (of Christ) and faith (on the part of the justified). It is possible, but it is not said how Paul conceives the passage from Christ's fidelity to the believers' faith. Let us recognize that Gal 3:15–4:7 is one of the most laconic on this subject. However, it is possible to find elsewhere how Paul understands the relationship between God's work of liberation and faith as justification. A passage like 2Cor 5:18-21, previously presented in this essay<sup>43</sup>, gives a better description of this connection: by His Son, God has reconciled us with Him, but He entrusts to the heralds of the Gospel of each generation the announcement of this reconciliation so that it may be believed and may happen. It is the same for redemption, a work accomplished in/by the death of the Son of God, a work in which the evangelical announcement invites us to believe, so that by believing we may be justified. For Paul, the justification of believers is thus the effect of their act of faith in the redemption realized *in illo tempore*.

## Conclusions

If in Gal 3:6-14, the discussion was focused on the condition and the modalities of justification without it being possible to determine accurately the function of this discourse in the overall theology, Gal 3:15–4:7 allows seeing, on the other hand, that the theme of justification is functional: it is ordered to something other than itself. It is first of all the language that Paul had to utilize in order to demonstrate that the Churches must not become Jewish communities — the question of justification was occasioned by the relationship between ethnic and Judeo-Christians but was also expressed with categories borrowed from Judaism. It is then in the service of the familial identity of all believers and all communities; in other words, the doctrine of justification is not sufficient in and of itself: once shown

<sup>43</sup> Cf. pp. 33-39.

that justification takes place by faith without the works of the Law, it remains to determine what is at the heart of Christian identity. If the “without the Law” is necessary, it is not sufficient for explaining all the dimensions of the Apostle’s theology, which needs other categories and other semantic fields in order to express the status and identify of justified believers correctly. Rather than making the doctrine of justification the center of Pauline theology, the course taken shows that it is necessary to see it as *prolegomena*, necessary to the extent that the Churches could never be able to remove from the theoretical and practical horizon their relationship to Judaism, to the Law and to the covenants.

The texts presented up to this point reflect the situation of the first communities and the way in which Paul negatively responded to the proposed circumcision of ethnic Christians by reflecting on the Law and its role in the economy of salvation. But another aspect of justification has been, above all since the Reformation, the object of multiple and divergent studies on the statements of Paul: do the justified have a true justice or not; are they capable of doing good? In other words, are they interiorly transformed, or is their justification only forensic? A passage from Galatians 5 is going to help us to see if and how the Apostle settles the question.

## CHAPTER VI

### **Paul's Exhortations in Gal 5:16-25 Believers and Their Justice**

Up to this point, we have seen the consequences that justification had for the status of believers, namely their becoming sons and heirs. The exegesis of Gal 5:16-25 is going to allow us to reconsider the moral capacity of the justified, in other words, the question of *simul justus et peccator*. Moreover, this passage provides an opportunity to examine three controversial points: (1) where does the exhortative section begin: in Gal 5:1 or 5:13? (2) what is the meaning of Gal 5:17, and (3) how can Paul's emphasis on the flesh/Spirit enmity in Gal 5:16-25 be explained. And since the meaning of the flesh/Spirit opposition depends mostly on the interpretation of Gal 5:17, I will focus on this verse, the difficulties of which are well-known, so much so that it has even been said that this verse is "one of the most difficult in the whole letter"<sup>1</sup>. If, however, I am here taking up again the study of this verse in its context, it is less to present new interpretations than to state some of the important consequences that Paul's thought on justification has had on the exhortative part of the letters to the Galatians and to the Romans.

#### **1. The Limits of the Exhortative Part of Galatians**

For some exegetes, the exhortative part begins in Gal 5:1, but for others in 5:13. In order to determine with certainty the beginning of this part, it is important to take into account the Apostle's way of proceeding in this letter, a way of proceeding that is customary for him. Indeed, paradoxically, in many of his argumentations, Paul does not treat questions at the level at which they are asked. And this is the case in Galatians, in which the question that was confronting the communities of the region was clearly that of the circumcision of believers coming from paganism. But Paul does not give an immediate response by declaring loud and clear his rejection of circumcision but first makes a long detour in order to show that his answer comes from the Gospel.

Let us briefly show that this way of proceeding is found in the Pauline letters more often than is thought. In 1Cor 1, Paul says that he has heard about the dis-

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<sup>1</sup> J.M.G. BARCLAY, *Obedying the Truth*. A Study of Paul's Ethics in Galatians (Studies of the New Testament and its World; Edinburgh 1988) 112.

putes concerning the apostles that exist between the members of the community. But instead of responding immediately, he begins by recalling the overthrow of the values brought about by the cross in order to point out to the Christians of Corinth that they have remained attached to the values of the world and have not yet entered into those of the Gospel, which are totally opposed to the first. Only in 3:5-17 does he give his response — that the apostles are only the servants of the Gospel and that what is important is the status of the community. In short, *he makes a detour*, which is in fact foundational, because he returns to the decisive event of the cross and emphasizes above all that ecclesiological questions find their answer primarily in Christology. Elsewhere, I have shown that this same way is used in 1Cor 8-10, 1Cor 12-14 and 15<sup>2</sup>. This recurrence confirms Paul's tendency to postpone the immediate responses (or to be content with them); it also shows that in his responses, the Apostle is less concerned with his correspondents' reasons or motivations than with the consequences of their position. That is why it is often difficult to reconstruct with exactness the situations or the difficulties confronting the Christians whom Paul is addressing.

From the sections of 1Cor that have just been mentioned, one can draw an important methodological conclusion. In these argumentations, the Apostle only responds to the communities' problems and questions after a more or less long and radical detour has been made. This means that it is necessary to be careful not to believe too quickly that the communities' problems determine the rhetorical genre of the Pauline letters<sup>3</sup> because it is not the communities' problems that provide the criteria that determine the letters' rhetorical genre *but the way in which Paul treats them*. Thus, 1Cor 14 could cause one to think that the genre of the entire section 1Cor 12-14 is deliberative — because what the Apostle really wants is to lead his correspondents to *concrete decisions*. But by enlarging his response, which includes the praise of *agapē* (1Cor 13) and which is of the epidictic genre, Paul is showing us that a concrete question can also be treated epidictically. For he judges it to be less important to tell his correspondents what concrete decisions they must make than to give them the means of rectifying their values and the false or superficial idea that they still have of the Gospel.

Thus, if the Apostle's tendency is to take a step back and not immediately respond to concrete questions but rather to carry the debate to a greater radicality, this means that *his discourse is much less contingent than has been said* because

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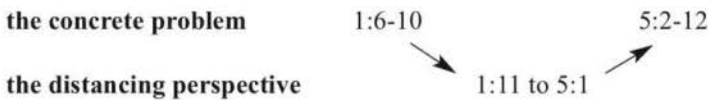
<sup>2</sup> J.N. ALETTI, "La rhétorique paulinienne", *Paul, une théologie en construction* (eds. A. DETTWILER – J.D. KAESTLI – D. MARGUERAT) (Monde de la Bible 51; Genève 2004) 47-66; repeated in *Id.*, *New Approaches*, 11-35.

<sup>3</sup> As everyone knows, the three ancient rhetorical genres are the judiciary, the deliberative, and the epidictic.

more than creating a casuistic work, he is enlarging the questions by stating the fundamental and lasting relationships without which the questions (and the answers) would lose their pertinence<sup>4</sup>.

Let us return to Galatians in which the way of proceeding is the same. If it is true that the question confronted by the Christians of this region, the majority coming from pagan origins, is circumcision, Paul does not immediately enjoin them not to be circumcised. In Gal 1–2, the question of circumcision only appears progressively<sup>5</sup>. Not until Gal 5:2 does Paul declare to them: “If you receive circumcision, Christ will be of no advantage (*ōphelēsei*) to you”<sup>6</sup>. For the Apostle has used the preceding chapters to remind them of the main point of the Gospel by showing them that circumcision — in others words, their becoming subjects of the Mosaic Law — has no part in it because circumcision can make them neither sons nor heirs. Since Galatians consists of a fundamental restating of the Gospel and its consequences, one can see that Paul’s goal is to communicate less moral instructions than the extraordinary power of the Gospel.

In short, after the long *distancing perspective*, which goes from Gal 1:11 to 5:1 and treats the question at a deeper and more radical level, Paul is able to return to the concrete situation and express his disapproval of whoever is thinking about being circumcised or already has been. As for the unit Gal 5:2-12, in which Paul gives an explicit opinion on circumcision, it proceeds in two subunits, vv. 2-6 and 7-12. In the first, Paul takes up the situation in Galatia and the resolutions anticipated by the area’s believers along with their consequences (vv. 2-4); he then contrasts these plans with the situation in Christ (vv. 5-6). In the second, he portrays the opponents and stigmatizes their influence on the Galatians: if he sees that all will end positively for them (those who will change their opinion), he, nevertheless, announces the rejection of the agitators. Paul’s way of proceeding can thus be diagrammed:



<sup>4</sup> Incidentally, this propensity to go to the root of the questions in order to deepen and universalize them curiously resembles Hellenism’s way of proceeding, as has been magnificently shown by J. de ROMILLY, *Pourquoi la Grèce?* (Paris 1992). Clearly, the observation means neither to deny nor forget Paul’s Jewish and scriptural background but only to highlight the influence that Greek culture and education had in the world at that time. On this subject, see the interesting work of RASTOIN, *Tarse et Jérusalem*.

<sup>5</sup> The first mention is found in Gal 2:7.

<sup>6</sup> The verb *opheilō* designates the goal of the deliberative genre, namely the useful. This is what has caused some to interpret what Galatians is saying as belonging to this genre.



If I have laid out Paul's way of proceeding in Galatians, it is in order to show that the concrete problem was that of the circumcision of the ethnic Christians and not questions concerning dietary and cultic regulations; furthermore, it is the distancing perspective that has allowed him to radicalize the problem and to show that if the ethnic Christians yielded to the Judaizers, the effects would be devastating.

## 2. The Composition of the Exhortations of Gal 5:13-25

Thus, the exhortative part of the letter goes from Gal 5:13 to 6:10 and includes three units that are easily identifiable thanks to the thematic changes and to their composition: 5:13-15<sup>7</sup>, 5:16-25 and 5:26-6:10. Some commentators connect 5:26 with 5:16-25 but others with 6:1-10. Because Gal 6:1 is not syntactically linked to what precedes it and begins with an apostrophe ("Brothers"), the first reading seems to be favorable; but, in Paul, this apostrophe does not necessarily indicate the beginning of another rhetorical unit<sup>8</sup>. In fact, Gal 5:26 is introducing the themes that are developed in Gal 6:1-10<sup>9</sup>.

As for Gal 5:16-25, its unity is easily noted thanks to the opposition of the flesh/Spirit. If all commentators agree in recognizing an alternation of these two terms, they are not in agreement on the passage's composition. According to Dunn, the section falls fairly naturally into an *abcba* pattern that runs from v. 16 to v. 24<sup>10</sup>:

a 16-17	assurance against desire of the flesh
b 18	led by the Spirit, not under the Law
c 19-21	works of the flesh
c' 22-23a	fruit of the Spirit [...]
b' 23b	[...] the Law not against
a' 24	assurance against the flesh and its desires

It is possible to refine the composition, mainly semantic, noted by Dunn by first observing that, like the preceding verses (vv. 13-15) and like numerous exhortative units in the Pauline letters, the overall composition is concentric:

$a^1 = 5:16$	<i>exhortation announcing the theme</i>
$B = 5:17-24$	<i>motivations or reasons</i>
$a^2 = 5:25$	<i>repetition of the exhortation</i>

<sup>7</sup> A concentrically composed unit:  $a^1$  exhortation (5:13),  $b$  motivations (5:14), and  $a^2$  resumption of the exhortation (5:15).

<sup>8</sup> See, for ex., Rom 1:13; 10:1; 1Cor 7:24; 14:20; Phil 3:13; 1Thess 5:25.

<sup>9</sup> Not to yield to vainglory by believing oneself superior but by becoming the servant of the weakest.

<sup>10</sup> See DUNN, *Galatians*, 295.

The positive exhortation in v. 16a is immediately followed by its negative consequence (v. 16b) and portrays the two opposing powers, the Spirit (*c*) and the flesh (*d*), to which this unit is devoted<sup>11</sup>:

exhortation (pos.)	<i>c</i>	<sup>16a</sup> (But I say) walk by the Spirit
(neg.)	<i>d</i>	<sup>16b</sup> and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.

The exhortation's motivation (vv. 16-24) unfolds by continuing the flesh/Spirit alternation<sup>12</sup>:

motivations	<i>d</i>	<sup>17</sup> For the flesh desires against the Spirit but the Spirit desires against the flesh,
		for those (powers) fight each another <sup>13</sup>
	<i>c</i>	to prevent you from doing those (things) you would. <sup>18</sup> But if you are led by the Spirit you are not under the law.
development of the motivations		
the works of the flesh	<i>D</i>	<sup>19</sup> Now the works of the flesh are plain: fornication, impurity, licentiousness, <sup>20</sup> idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, anger, selfishness, dissension, party spirit, <sup>21</sup> envy, drunkenness, carousing, and the like. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.
the fruit of the Spirit	<i>C</i>	<sup>22</sup> But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, <sup>23</sup> gentleness, self-control; against such there is no law.
conclusion		<sup>24</sup> And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

Thus the motivation is deployed in two stages. In the first (vv. 17-18), Paul shows why it is important to allow oneself to be guided and led by the Spirit and not by the flesh: these two powers are opposed to each other, and one cannot associate them. In the second (vv. 19-23), the effects of each of these two powers are described, effects that clearly manifest the opposition stated in the first stage.

<sup>11</sup> The letters *c/C* designate the statements relating to flesh and the letters *d/D* those relating to the Spirit. The lower case letters designate the short units and the upper case letters the longer units.

<sup>12</sup> Vv. 18-25, trans. RSV.

<sup>13</sup> No matter what has been said by O. HOFIUS, "Widerstreit zwischen Fleisch und Geist? Erwägungen zu Gal 5,17", *Der Mensch vor God. Forschungen zum Menschenbild in Bibel, antikem Judentum und Koran*. FS Hermann Lichtenberger (ed. U. MITTMANN – F. AVE-MARIE – G.S. OEGEMA) (Neukirchen-Vluyn 2003) 165, for whom the enmity is passive ("feind sein"), the repetition of the verb ἐπιθυμέω + κατά clearly means that the verb ἀντίκειμαι must have an active connotation ("streiten", "kämpfen").

### 3. Gal 5:17: Difficulties and Proposals

The overall arrangement does not pose a major problem, in as much as the flesh/Spirit alternation is obvious, as has been seen by Dunn:

(d)	v. 17	the flesh
(c)	v. 18	the Spirit <sup>14</sup>
(D)	vv. 19-21	the flesh and its works
(C)	vv. 22-23	the Spirit and its fruits

The alternation, which is barely described, invites considering v. 17 as principally speaking of the flesh and its negative designs. Nevertheless, its syntactical construction can be interpreted in various ways and actually has been. The relationship of the four propositions

17α ἡ γὰρ σὰρξ ἐπιθυμεῖ κατὰ<sup>15</sup> τοῦ πνεύματος,  
 17β τὸ δὲ πνεῦμα κατὰ τῆς σαρκός,  
 17γ ταῦτα γὰρ ἀλλήλοις ἀντίκειται,  
 17δ ἵνα μὴ ἂ ἐὰν θέλητε ταῦτα ποιῆτε.

raises important soteriological and anthropological questions. Three readings are possible: in the first two, 17δ can be connected with 17γ, but in the third, 17δ can also be related to 17α, in which case 17β and 17γ form an incidental clause. But even if 17δ does depend upon 17γ, two possible readings exist. For the first, the flesh/Spirit antagonism would result in the paralysis of the believer: “for<sup>16</sup> these

<sup>14</sup> Commentators note the ambiguity of the term πνεῦμα, which can designate the human spirit or the divine Spirit. If there is actually an ambiguity in vv. 17-18, vv. 22-23 definitively remove it because charity and the other fruits mentioned have the divine πνεῦμα as their origin. Moreover, if in this passage πνεῦμα designated the human spirit, it would cause a semantic anarchy since all the preceding occurrences of the word in Galatians designated the Holy Spirit. Thus, even if the human spirit “is that aspect of the person that is open to domination by the Holy Spirit” (D. HARRINGTON – J. KEENAN, *Paul and Virtue Ethics* [Lanham 2010] 110) and if for this reason it is in opposition to the flesh and could be the power designated by Paul in v. 17, vv. 22-23, nevertheless, invite seeing the divine Spirit designated by the word *pneuma*. In order to indicate this, here the word *Spirit* will be capitalized. This being said, although the Spirit is of divine origin, it is not only external to the believer: the exhortations in Gal 5 must be read according to and in relation to the preceding occurrences of the vocable, in particular Gal 4:6, in which it is said that “God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts”.

<sup>15</sup> MARTYN, *Galatians*, 493, rightly notes that only here is the verb *epithymēō* with *kata* and the genitive encountered and asks if there could not be an influence of Aramaic syntax.

<sup>16</sup> The Greek conjunction *gar* in v. 17α and 17γ is each time explicative and not causal. Cf. BUSCEMI, *Galati*, 551.

(things)<sup>17</sup> are opposed to one another *so that* (ὥστε)<sup>18</sup> you cannot do the things that you would"<sup>19</sup>. The verse has often been understood as describing a situation analogous to that in Rom 7:15 and 20<sup>20</sup>. For the second reading, far from causing the paralysis of the believer, the flesh/Spirit antagonism, on the contrary, prompts him to discernment and not to do everything that comes to mind, in other words, what is injurious and evil: "these things are opposed to one another in order to prevent you from doing whatever you would". The third reading, which has recently been proposed, makes 17β and 17γ an incidental clause and connects 17δ to 17α: "For the flesh desires against the Spirit — and the Spirit desires against the flesh; for those fight each other<sup>21</sup> — to prevent you from doing those things you would". In this case, the verse is describing the negative designs of the flesh against the Spirit in order to prevent believers from doing the good they would like to do, and, by using an incidental clause, Paul adds that the Spirit does not remain passive, his role being precisely to thwart the designs of the flesh.

An example of the first reading is found in Dunn's commentary<sup>22</sup>, for whom the verse is describing the situation of the Christian, in whom the Spirit's action

<sup>17</sup> The neuter demonstrative pronoun *tauta* in v. 17γ clearly designates the flesh and the Spirit. As a consequence of their having different genders in Greek (flesh = feminine; Spirit = neuter), the pronoun must be neuter. This neuter pronoun does not allow concluding that Paul is making the flesh and the Spirit impersonal entities. With good reason, BUSCEMI, *Galati*, 552, opposes Betz, for whom "The neuter *tauta* (these things) identifies flesh and Spirit as impersonal forces acting within man and waging war against each other" (*Galatians* [Hermeneia; Philadelphia 1979] 279). Undoubtedly, it would be better to translate it with 'powers/forces' rather than 'things'.

<sup>18</sup> In that case, the ὥστε would be consecutive.

<sup>19</sup> The King James Translation. According to Dunn, in order for the verse to make sense, it is necessary for the *hina* to be final (telic) and not consecutive. But "[t]his fact forbids taking *ha ean thelēte* as referring to the things which one naturally, by the flesh, desires, and understanding the clause as an expression of the beneficent result of walking by the Spirit". He adds: "The final clause is to be understood not as expressing the purpose of God [...] (for neither is the subject of the sentence a word referring to God, nor is the thought thus yielded a Pauline thought), nor of the flesh alone, nor of the Spirit alone, but as the purpose of both flesh and Spirit, in the sense that the flesh opposes the Spirit that men may not do what they will in accordance with the mind of the Spirit, and the Spirit opposes the flesh that they may not do what they will after the flesh. Does the man choose evil, the Spirit opposes him; does he choose good, the flesh hinders him". DUNN, *Galatians*, 297.

<sup>20</sup> For here and there, one encounters a contrast between *wanting* and *doing* (in Greek, θέλειν/ποιεῖν) since Paul says that one cannot *do* what one *wants*. A reading that is generally qualified as Lutheran.

<sup>21</sup> The ἀντίκειται is generally translated "are opposed". In order to avoid the opposition being interpreted passively, I have preferred to use an active verb.

<sup>22</sup> The same reading in MARTYN, *Galatians*, 494, who, furthermore, notes that given v. 16, "one should have expected quite a different closure in this sentence: 'for the Flesh is actively

exacerbates the human experience in general: "Where life previously could be lived on the level of the flesh with little or no self-questioning, now the presence of the Spirit brings with it a profound disease with the reduction of humanity to the level of animal appetites. It is important to recognize that Paul sees this as a Christian condition"<sup>23</sup>. A situation about which he thus comments: "There is no perfection for the Christian in this life; the desires of flesh as well as of Spirit characterize the ongoing process of salvation"<sup>24</sup>. Whether the meaning given to the conjunction *ἵνα* is final or consecutive, the result of this struggle is the same: the flesh prevents the believer from doing what the Spirit prompts him to do, and reciprocally, the Spirit prevents the same believer from following the solicitations of the flesh. Such a situation can be qualified as paralysis; still according to Dunn (and others with him), it is analogous to what is described in Rom 7:14-25. This being said, today, commentators, on the whole, admit to a difference between Gal 5:16-25 and Rom 7:7-25, which is not speaking about the Christian but the man without Christ; they are also convinced that the context of Gal 5:17, in particular Gal 5:24, is not describing believers paralyzed by an interior struggle because if they allow themselves to be led by the Spirit, they are not yielding to the desires of the flesh: "And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires"<sup>25</sup>. Indeed, the passage's dynamic assumes that believers are able to be led by the Spirit and actually are; otherwise, the exhortation would no longer make sense: what would be the good of exhorting believers who were prevented from following the solicitations of the flesh as well as the promptings of the Spirit?

However, because the immediate context of v. 17 assumes that the believers are able to escape from the slavery of the flesh and are able to be guided by the Spirit, exegetes have been compelled to interpret this verse in a different way, as witnessed by the second and third readings. As seen above, for the second, the struggle between the flesh and the Spirit has a positive result, namely *preventing us from* doing *whatever* we want, in other words, *no matter what*, or even from wanting to satiate all our impulses<sup>26</sup>. The struggle between the flesh and the Spirit permits some options and excludes others. In short, this struggle prompts the believer to discern be-

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inclined against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the Flesh'. These two powers constitute a pair of opposites at war with one another, and the result of this war, commenced by the Spirit, is that the Spirit is in the process of liberating you from the power of the Flesh".

<sup>23</sup> DUNN, *Galatians*, 297.

<sup>24</sup> DUNN, *Galatians*, 297.

<sup>25</sup> Gal 5:24. Trans. RSV.

<sup>26</sup> In addition to BARCLAY, *Obeying the Truth*, 113, and the authors cited by J. LAMBRECHT, "The Right Things You Want to Do. A Note on Galatians 5,17d", *Bib* 79 (1998) 515-524", see the commentary of VANHOYE, *Galati*, 136.

tween what must be avoided (what is evil and thus harmful) and what must be preferred (what is good and thus profitable). If, in this case, the Greek relative pronoun ἃ is given a distributive meaning (“all those things that”) or even a universal one (“absolutely all the things that”), it is, nevertheless, actually designating the evil orientations or impulses. A passage from Plato’s *Lysis*<sup>27</sup>, from which some expressions are close to those of Gal 5:17, seems to favor this interpretation:

- Socrates (207e) Do you consider that a man is happy when enslaved and restricted from doing the things he desires (ποιεῖν ὧν ἐπιθυμοῖ)?
- Lysis Not I, on my word.
- Socrates Then if your father and mother are fond of you, and desire to see you happy, it is perfectly plain that they are anxious to secure your happiness.
- Lysis They must be, of course.
- Socrates Hence they allow you to do what you want/like (ἐῶσιν ἅρα σε ἃ βούλει ποιεῖν), and never scold you, or hinder (διακουλύουσιν) you from doing what you (could possibly) desire (ποιεῖν ὧν ἂν ἐπιθυμήῃς)?
- Lysis Yes, they do, Socrates. I assure you: they stop me from doing a great many things (μάλα γε πολλὰ κωλύουσιν).

In short, if one compares this passage from *Lysis* with Gal 5:17, one could say that in the second reading the parents and the flesh/Spirit struggle have the same role, that of preventing the children/believers from desiring anything whatsoever and thus confusing true liberty with the absence of all constraint. In this case, Paul could have implicitly continued with the metaphor used in Gal 4, once again reminding the Christians of Galatia that they have remained small children in need of a pedagogue that prevents them from doing all that they would like, from following all their desires, especially the most foolish and dangerous, in order that progressively they may experiment with what is true liberty since for the Socrates of *Lysis*, as for him, such is the role of the pedagogue<sup>28</sup>. Nevertheless, the comparison remains dubious because it is the Spirit, and he alone, who prevents the believers from doing whatever might come to mind. In other words, more than the reciprocal flesh/Spirit enmity, it is the intervention and kind attention of the Spirit (and His alone) that prevents the believers from following all their impulses. One may also ask if in Gal 5:17δ, the relative pronoun has all the extension — and the distributive meaning — that the second reading gives to it. Indeed, when

<sup>27</sup> PLATO, *Lysis*, 207e-208a. Cf. RASTOIN, *Tarse et Jérusalem*, 234-243, in which is found a commentary on the passage and an interesting comparison with Gal 4:1-2 because the ideas and words in common with *Lysis* and Gal 3-4 are too numerous to speak of a coincidence.

<sup>28</sup> PLATO, *Lysis*, 208c and Gal 3:24; 4:1-3.



Paul wants to give the maximal (or distributive) extension to a relative pronoun, he precedes it with the adjective *πάς*, as in Col 3:17: *πάν ὃ τι ἐὰν ποιῇτε ἐν λόγῳ ἢ ἐν ἔργῳ* (“Whatever you do, in word or deed”) or Gal 3:10: *ἐπικατάρατος πᾶς ὃς οὐκ ἐμμένει πᾶσιν τοῖς γεγραμμένοις ἐν τῷ βιβλίῳ τοῦ νόμου* (“Cursed be every one who does not abide by all things written in the book of the law”)<sup>29</sup>; he also uses both the definite relative pronouns (*ὅσος*<sup>30</sup>, *οἷος*<sup>31</sup>) and the indefinites (*ὅστις*<sup>32</sup>, *ὅποῖος*<sup>33</sup>). But because none of these relative pronouns appears in Gal 5:17, it is uncertain whether the simple *ἃ* should be translated by *whatever*.

Another possibility, a little different from the preceding one, presents itself and understands the relative pronoun as referring to negative things: “the evil things that you want to do”. The verse would then be saying that in the flesh/Spirit struggle, it is the Spirit that triumphs over the flesh and prevents us from executing the evil things to which the flesh impels us. Although in complete agreement with the immediate context, in which Paul assumes that the Christians are allowing themselves to be guided by the Spirit, this reading has been rejected by another exegete<sup>34</sup>. And if Paul had wanted to indicate that the believers want to do evil, it would have been easy to add an *ad hoc* adjective. Would it not be better, with others, to interpret this relative pronoun positively: “the good things that you would like to do”? Those, like Lambrecht, for whom this is the meaning of the relative pronoun, invoke the positive denotation that the Greek verb *θέλω* has in Rom 7:14-20<sup>35</sup>. Even if the situation of the *egō* in Rom 7:7-25 and that of the believers in Gal 5:16-24 is different, because the *egō* in Rom 7:7ff is not Christian, it is necessary to admit that Gal 5:17 is not considering the good or evil wants of the Christians but the struggle between the flesh and the Spirit, which are the *only* active realities<sup>36</sup>. Indeed, the flesh strug-

<sup>29</sup> Trans. RSV. Deut 27:26 reads: *ἐπικατάρατος πᾶς ἄνθρωπος ὃς οὐκ ἐμμένει [...]* etc. See also Rom 10:13.

<sup>30</sup> 25x in total; in particular, 5x in Gal (3:10, 27; 4:1, 6:12, 16). The neuter plural *ὅσα* is found in Rom 3:19; 15:4 and Phil 4:8 (6x).

<sup>31</sup> 10x in total (but not in Galatians).

<sup>32</sup> Gal 5:10; Phil 2:20 and Col 3:17 that has just been mentioned.

<sup>33</sup> 1Cor 3:13; Gal 2:6; 1Thess 1:9. But he does not utilize *ὅπόσος*.

<sup>34</sup> BARCLAY, *Obedying the Truth*, 114, according to whom, this interpretation “has the great advantage of fitting the context well, supporting and illustrating the confident statement of 5:16. [But] [i]ts problems lie in accommodating the central clause (“these are opposed to each other”) and explaining why ‘whatever you want’ should be taken as ‘what the flesh desires’” (emphasis mine).

<sup>35</sup> Cf. Rom 7:15, 16, 18, 19, 20. On this exact point, see LAMBRECHT, “The Right Things You Want to Do”.

<sup>36</sup> On the difference of the perspective in Rom 7 and Gal 5:17, see, for ex., BETZ, *Galatians*, 279-280.



gles against the Spirit (and not directly against the believers), and if it struggles against the Spirit, it is so that believers cannot be protected and as a result produce those evil works that are of the flesh and are enumerated in vv. 19-21. Indeed, v. 17 supposes that the believers want to be led by the Spirit and its meaning depends on that of the surrounding verses, namely v. 16 ("walk by the Spirit") and v. 18a, a conditional proposition that takes up the line of thought and expresses an actual condition: "But if (= if it is true that) you are led by the Spirit". However, the objection made above on the negative denotation of the relative pronoun is also valid for a possible positive denotation in so far as one makes 17δ depend upon 17γ.

As to the relative pronoun ὅς, it can have a positive denotation if one follows the third reading, which connects v. 17δ with 17α and makes the two intermediate lines (β and γ) an incidental clause, as the following disposition indicates, in which the hyphens indicate the limits of this incidental clause<sup>37</sup>:

17α For (γάρ) the flesh desires against the Spirit,  
 — 17β but (δέ) the Spirit desires against the flesh,  
 17γ for (γάρ) those (powers) fight each other —,  
 17δ to (ἵνα) prevent you from doing those (things) you would.

This way of seeing the relationships between lines gives a positive meaning to the relative pronoun<sup>38</sup>. The verse must then be understood thus: the flesh desires against the Spirit, in order to prevent you from doing the good that you would like (and that the Spirit prompts you to do). The two central lines, the incidental clause, have as their function supplying details to 17α: the first 17β, to indicate that the enmity is not one way, and the second 17γ, which is an *expositio*<sup>39</sup>, to confirm that the flesh and the Spirit are really antagonistic powers and that this antagonism is not occasional but *structural*. To this reading, one can make some objections<sup>40</sup>. It is a fact that it is very recent; indeed, over the centuries, all readers have spontaneously connected 17δ with 17γ. Equally, because of the δέ, which denotes a contrast, it seems difficult to separate 17β from 17α<sup>41</sup>; as for 17γ, it seems to give the

<sup>37</sup> See the articles of J. KILGALLAN, "The Strivings of the Flesh... (Galatians 5,17)", *Bib* 80 (1999) 113-114, and of HOFIUS, "Widerstreit zwischen Fleisch und Geist?".

<sup>38</sup> Thus, Hofius, and it seems, Kilgallen.

<sup>39</sup> A figure that consists of repeating, in greater detail, the same thing or the same argument in equivalent terms.

<sup>40</sup> A recent commentary has even declared that it was desperate but without showing why. Cf. LÉMONON, *Galates*, 184, who follows rather the first reading.

<sup>41</sup> It is one of the main reasons for which Lambrecht, in a very recent article, rejects this reading, "Once Again Galatians 5,17. Grammar and Logic in the Exegesis of O. Hofius", *ETL* 89

reason for both 17 $\alpha$  and 17 $\beta$  and not only for 17 $\beta$ . This being said, that this reading is recent does not invalidate its value because several Pauline passages previously understood in erroneous ways have been revisited in recent decades and translated correctly<sup>42</sup>. As for the relationship that exists between the different lines, however it may appear, the close connection between the contrast of 17 $\alpha$  and 17 $\beta$  is not destroyed by the incidental clause, but just the opposite, since the latter has as its primary function explaining and clarifying the enigmatic formulation that 17 $\alpha$  makes of the flesh/Spirit relationship. If ultimately the third reading has been preferred here, it is because of the rhetorical arrangement: since all the others units of vv. 17-23 deal respectively with only one of the agents, the flesh (D) or the Spirit (c/C), that of v. 17 (d) must deal with the flesh and its desires (lines 17 $\alpha$  and 17 $\delta$ ); and this means that in v. 17 the intermediary lines 17 $\beta$  and 17 $\gamma$  are an incidental clause.

Notwithstanding the explanations provided above on the incidental clause 17 $\beta$  + 17 $\gamma$ , many readers connect 17 $\delta$  with 17 $\gamma$  and stay with the second reading, and in the best of cases, the one proposed by Barclay and Vanhoye. Nevertheless, let us add that in other passages of his letters — such as 1Cor 14:2 —, Paul does not hesitate to insert parentheses that create semantic difficulties and oblige the reader to rely upon his memory if he wants to recover the discourse's line of thought<sup>43</sup>. This could also be the same for Gal 5:17. In fact, the distance between “For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit” and “to prevent you from doing what you would”<sup>44</sup> is reduced; it does not prevent associating the final proposition with the first segment of the sentence. The adversative particle “but” (δέ) authorizes there being another part of the parenthesis or incidental clause, whereas a καί (“the flesh desires against the Spirit *and* the Spirit against the flesh”) would make it impossible<sup>45</sup>.

None of the readings of Gal 5:17 that we have just presented are apodictically obvious. If here we have preferred the third to the other two, it is solely because it excellently respects the passage's dynamic and the alternation of the flesh/Spirit presentations. Indeed, it permits recovering the final value of the 17 $\alpha$ , and it makes

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(2013) 113-115: “The grammatical and structural analysis of Hofius cannot be accepted. 17a and 17b belong together. The form is strictly parallel, the content antithetical. In 17b one finds πνεῦμα over against σὰρξ of 17a, and κατὰ τῆς σαρκός over against κατὰ τοῦ πνεύματος; in addition there is the oppositional, yet connecting in 17b. One should not split up the syntactical unit of 17ab” (114).

<sup>42</sup> I am thinking of Phil 3:9 and Col 1:24, in particular.

<sup>43</sup> In 1Cor 14:2, the explicative parenthesis “for no one (*oudeis*) understands him” causes the reader to question what is the subject of the following verb (“he utters mysteries”), which clearly cannot be the *oudeis* of the parenthesis but “the one who speaks in tongues”.

<sup>44</sup> Trans. RSV for both lines.

<sup>45</sup> That current translations unfortunately understand it as if there were a *kai* (“and”).

complete sense because if the flesh is opposed to the Spirit, it is really *so that* we do not do what we want. As articulated by the third reading, the verse takes into account the argumentation's dynamic, that is, whoever is led by the Spirit can finally do what [that is to say, *the good*] he wants. Far from emphasizing a defeat, Paul is indirectly highlighting the superiority of the Spirit. As for the incidental clause, its function is also clear: Paul is reminding his readers that if the flesh struggles against the Spirit, the latter is there in order to respond to the attacks because this is truly His role.

At this point, it is not a bad idea to retrace the route taken so far because it clearly shows that different, even non-confessional, readings can have important theological consequences. The first reading highlights the imperfection, and, at the worst, the ethical paralysis of believers; for the second, Paul is wanting to recall that liberty is not the equivalent of an absence of all constraint and that believers must resist their impulses; according to the third, by recognizing that the flesh struggles against the Spirit, the Apostle is pointing out that the flesh has in the Spirit a lasting and effective antagonist. If each reading appeals to reasons that are non-confessional, their way of understanding the status of works in Paul are clearly felt. After having stated my agreement with the choice of the third reading for Gal 5:17, it remains for me to develop some of the components of the passage's exhortations.

#### 4. The Exhortations of Gal 5:13-15 and 16-25

The exegesis of Gal 5:17 has allowed extricating several interesting points:

- the flesh does not directly threaten the believer<sup>46</sup> but does directly take on the Spirit;
- because it is the Spirit that the flesh opposes so that the Spirit cannot guide the believer in putting into action what (in other words, the good) the believer wants. And the incidental clause of the lines 17β and 17γ opportunely recalls that the Spirit is in no way passive.
- While recalling that the plan of the flesh is to render powerless the will and the liberty of believers and to prevent them from doing good, Paul implies, still in the incidental clause, that the Spirit is stronger than the flesh and that He is there precisely in order to defend them continually and effectively. Thus, v. 17 does not reflect a negative soteriology according to which believers cannot be freed from the mastery of the flesh.

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<sup>46</sup> There would have been a direct opposition if Paul were speaking of the (human) spirit of the believer; but, as has been said above, what guides the believer and works in him is *agapē*, kindness, etc., and that can only be the divine Spirit.

The verses that follow clarify and confirm the statements of v. 17: the believers are left neither to their own forces nor enslaved to the flesh: they are able to allow themselves to be guided by the Spirit, and since this is so<sup>47</sup>, they have nothing to fear. This passage in Galatians and Rom 8:1-17 are the only passages in Paul's letters in which he develops the opposition of the flesh/Spirit but without saying exactly what these vocables entail, assuming that his readers know. Rather than clarifying what the vocables designate<sup>48</sup>, it is more important to determine the function of their opposition in these exhortations.

But first, a short examination of v. 18 is essential. Why does Paul say that if believers are led by the Spirit, they are not "under the νόμος" ("Law"), whereas, after the thoughts on the opposition of the flesh/Spirit and its implications, the reader expects Paul to declare that they were "beyond the reach of the *flesh*?" And what does the word νόμος designate? The Mosaic Law, without a doubt, because it is not the first time that Galatians has utilized the expression "under the Law"<sup>49</sup>, and it has always designated the Mosaic Law<sup>50</sup>. If the affirmation in Gal 5:18 is new, it has, nevertheless, been prepared for by the preceding argumentations, in which Paul says that believers are dead to the Law (2:19), that they have not received the Spirit by practicing the Law (3:2), and that by liberating them from the slavery of the Law, God has made them sons/daughters by the gift of the Spirit (4:4f). The Law and the Spirit are thus incompatible, just like the flesh and the Spirit. Verse 18 also implies that the one and only true guide for believers is the Spirit and not the Law — which the Jews regard as a light for their steps, a sure guide towards salvation, etc.<sup>51</sup>. Whoever has the Spirit for a guide is thus not submissive to the Law. But why has the vocable 'Law' replaced 'flesh' in v. 18? Because Paul is recalling and indirectly indicating to the Galatians that undergoing circumcision, and thus submitting to the Law, would mean their falling back under the power of the flesh, against which the Law remains powerless. In short, if they wanted to be 'under the Law', the Galatians would again be in the situation of subjection and enslavement (Gal 3:10ff and 4:5). As Dunn says, for Paul, "[t]o put oneself 'under the law', in other words, was to look in the wrong direction for

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<sup>47</sup> Let us recall that the conditional proposition in Gal 5:18a expresses an actual condition: "if you are led by the Spirit" is the equivalent of "since you are led by the Spirit".

<sup>48</sup> Let us recall that in this passage, the Greek word *pneuma* designates the Spirit of God, which has consistently been the case since its first occurrence in Gal 3:2. Other occurrences: Gal 3:3 (the first opposition of the flesh/Spirit); 3:5, 14; 4:6, 29; 5:5, 16, 18, 22, 25; 6:1, 8, 18.

<sup>49</sup> The upper case letter indicates that it is a question of the *Mosaic* Law and not any other type of law.

<sup>50</sup> Cf. Gal 3:23; 4:4, 5, 21.

<sup>51</sup> Prov 6:23; Isa 51:4; Ps 118/119:30.

salvation. Worse still, to assume that only 'under the law' could salvation be found was to deny the reality of Gentile as Gentile having received the Spirit"<sup>52</sup>.

One then understands why the theme of the Law runs throughout the exhortations of Gal 5:13-25: if the believers have been invited to fulfill the Law (5:14), they must not, however, become its subjects because this would be for them falling back into slavery and allowing themselves to be subjected to the flesh (5:13). Actually, the Law cannot judge and *a fortiori* condemn the fruits produced in them by the Spirit (5:23). In short, in this rhetorical unit, Paul wants to remind his readers of the *ethical* (and not only salvific, as in Gal 1-4) stakes that a return to the Law would have — that it would concretely mean a return to the slavery of the flesh. The opposition of the flesh/Spirit in these exhortations thus refers indirectly but surely to the thought of Gal 1-4 on justification. It is not a question of exhortations touching on particular sectors of life but of a radical attitude upon which all concrete decisions depend. In this respect, one will have noted that in Gal 5:16-25 there is a sparsity of verbs that have believers as their *active* subjects<sup>53</sup>; this obviously shows that Paul wants to emphasize how ethical behavior is conditioned by the salvific status, or even: doing by being.

If the background of Gal 5:16-25 is actually constituted by the status of the believers, who are not "under the Law" and thus are not slaves of the flesh, in other words, free, the passive in v. 18a ("if you are led [ἄγεσθε] by the Spirit") seems, however, to denote a real determinism<sup>54</sup>; but one also finds the same expression in Rom 8:14<sup>55</sup>, and one cannot see in it any heteronomy whatsoever. If in Gal 5:16-25 Paul is minimizing the believers' behavior, it is only to highlight the power and the efficacy of the Spirit in their favor.

Recently I have shown, in regards to Gal 3:10-14, that in Galatians one cannot limit the problem of the Law to rules about Jewish festivals, food, and separation alone<sup>56</sup>. And therefore, there is no reason to be astonished that if in Gal 5:16-25, in which Paul is reminding the believers of Galatia of the stakes and the radicalness of the choice to be made — the flesh or the Spirit —, there are no specific exhortations concerning these rules. As is his custom, Paul is radicalizing the questions

<sup>52</sup> DUNN, *Galatians*, 300. For the Apostle, "Implicit here also is a clear distinction between being 'under the law' and 'fulfilling the law' (5:14)" (*ibid.*).

<sup>53</sup> In v. 16 (exhortation), two verbs: "walk" and "do not gratify"; v. 17δ, two verbs: "what you would", "prevent you from doing"; v. 25 "let us also walk".

<sup>54</sup> Cf. Prov 18:2 (LXX); 2Tim 3:6, in which the determinism is clear. For non-biblical examples, see the BAGD, "ἄγω", § 3.

<sup>55</sup> Incidentally, Rom 8:14 confirms the divine designation of the word *pneuma* in Gal 5:16-25.

<sup>56</sup> J.N. ALETTI, "L'argumentation de Ga 3,10-14, une fois encore. Difficultés et propositions", *Bib* 92 (2011) 182-203" (English version in *New Approaches*, 237-260).

and emphasizing the stakes that often have not been perceived by the Churches he is addressing. This radicalization goes hand in hand with the focusing on what is essential: that is why the exhortations in Gal 5:16-25 place so much value on *agapē* and kindness towards the other believers<sup>57</sup>. If the list of vices (Gal 5:19-21) and virtues (Gal 5:22-23) are encountered elsewhere in Paul<sup>58</sup>, here the vocables denoting *agapē* or attitudes associated with it are more numerous<sup>59</sup>. Such an emphasis is understood if one recalls the statement of Gal 5:15: “if you bite and devour one another, take heed that you are not consumed by one another”<sup>60</sup>. The condition is true (“if it is true that”), and one can assuredly conclude that the question of the circumcision of the believers coming from the Gentile world had to have provoked large divisions in the local communities, and what was at risk was the destruction or the disappearance of the Church: here, the radicality of the ethical exhortations is in the service of the ecclesial life. This also explains why all, or almost all, the exhortations that go from Gal 5:13 to 6:10 concern the ecclesial life and not the relationships of the believers to “those outside”<sup>61</sup>. In short, after having led the believers in Galatia to the radicalness of the Gospel (Gal 1:11 to 5:1), Paul is reminding them that the ethical and ecclesial stakes of the situation are no less decisive<sup>62</sup>.

<sup>57</sup> One will have noted that these exhortations are not saying how to behave towards those on the outside, in other words, those who are not members of the Church. This does not mean that Paul is ignoring them, but that the question of circumcision was so urgent that he indirectly returns to them in the exhortations (Gal 5:16-25 and 6:8) and explicitly in the epistolary *postscriptum* (6:12-16).

<sup>58</sup> In the Pauline letters: 2Cor 6:6-7a; Eph 4:2-3:32; 5:9; Phil 4:8; Col 3:12, 1Tim 3:2-4, 8-10, 11-12; 4:12; 6:11, 18; 2Tim 2:22-25; 3:10; Titus 1:8; 2:2-10, but also elsewhere in the NT and non-biblical literature. On the subject, see J.T. FITZGERALD, “Virtue/Vices Lists”, *AYBD* VI, 857-859. For the list of vices in Paul, other than Gal 5:19-21, see Rom 1:29-31; 13:13, 1Cor 5:10-11; 6:9-10; 2Cor 12:20-21; Eph 4:31; 5:3-5; Col 3:5-8; 1Tim 1:9-10; 6:4-5; 2Tim 3:2-4; Titus 1:7; 3:3.

<sup>59</sup> Love (ἀγάπη) 2Cor 6:6-7; Eph 4:2; peace (εἰρήνη) only in Gal 5; patience (μακροθυμία) 2Cor 6:6; Eph 4:2; Col 3:12 kindness (χρηστότης) 2Cor 6:6; Col 3:12; goodness (ἀγαθωσύνη) Eph 5:9; meekness (πραΰτης) Gal 6:1; Eph 4:2; Col 3:12, 2Tim 2:25.

<sup>60</sup> Trans. RSV.

<sup>61</sup> The exhortation in Gal 6:10b, “[L]et us do good to all men (πρὸς πάντας)” (trans. RSV) is the only one to enlarge the ethical horizon.

<sup>62</sup> If the exhortations of Gal 5:13-25 stress *agapē* and kindness towards the brothers, they are not, however, proposing Christ as a model of welcome and compassion. Compare with Rom 14:15, 15:7; Eph 5:2, 25; Col 3:13. This comes without a doubt from the importance given to the divine Spirit and to the effects of his presence in the believers in 5:22-23.



## Conclusions

After having laid out the boundaries of the exhortative part of Galatians, and after having shown that one cannot interpret Gal 5:17 negatively, as describing the ethical paralysis of the believers, it has been possible for us to take into account the importance given to the opposition of the flesh/Spirit that goes from 5:13 to 6:10. The radicality of the ethical choices (the flesh or the Spirit) and, from there, the ecclesial consequences, clearly indicate *a posteriori* the decisive importance of the argumentation of Gal 1–4: what is at stake is quite simply the Gospel!

The repeated mention of the term νόμος in these exhortations also shows, if there were need, that the Law remains on the horizon of Paul's thoughts and confirms the radicality of his position: he is not only criticizing the importance given to the *identity markers*, in other words to the erroneous usage of the Law, but he is also placing the Law beside the flesh and indicating that it cannot be a way of salvation.

On justification, the reading of Galatians authorizes several conclusions.

(1) The discourse on justification was occasioned by the thorny question of the circumcision of ethnic Christians, but to this occasional question, Paul has wanted to give a non-occasional response.

(2) Prompted by the question of the circumcision of the ethnic Christians, Paul's thought remains polarized by the fundamental question on the relationship of Christians to the Mosaic legislative system and, to a broader extent, to the Scriptures.

(3) The question does not only concern the rules of kashrut and separation but even more radically the capacity of this Law to assure justification and to lead its subjects to salvation.

(4) The filial status that the believers obtain by justification comes from the transformation effected in them — actually, they are guided by the Holy Spirit. For this reason, their justification is not only forensic.

(5) By following the argumentation that goes from Gal 3:1 to 4:7, we have several times questioned the technical value of the arguments, principally scriptural, furnished by the Apostle. It has seemed to us that several of them could be overturned and did not succeed in confirming the separation between Law and faith affirmed by the Apostle. It thus remains to see if the argumentation of Romans is more convincing than that of Galatians.





## CHAPTER VII

### The Arrangement of Rom 1–3 and the Question of Justification

All commentators agree that in Rom 1–4 Paul is showing why and how God justifies. They recognize, moreover, that these chapters are divided into two large rhetorical units, Rom 1:18–3:20 and 3:21–4:25. But if they agree that the second unit expounds Paul's ideas on justification, they are divided on the interpretation of the first. The difference in the manner of proceeding from Gal 3 is obvious: while in Gal 3:1–6 Paul begins by reminding the Christians of Galatia of the effects of justification — charisms and gifts of the Holy Spirit —, in Rom 1:18ff, he begins with punitive divine justice that apparently has nothing to do with justification. The question then becomes the following: what does Paul want to show in Rom 1:18–3:20? This is what will constitute our first inquiry into the letter to the Romans.

The logic of the passage, as it has been understood by the majority of exegetes, does not sufficiently take into account those who were the first addressees of the letter, namely, the members of the Roman community. Dabourne and following him Penna seem to have been the only ones who truly take into account this aspect in order to explain the vocabulary and line of thought of Rom 1:18–3:20<sup>1</sup>. According to them, these chapters present retributive justice from outside the Gospel's perspective: before outlining his own conception of divine justice (which justifies by faith alone without the works of the Law, in Rom 3:2–4:25), Paul takes up the idea and the precomprehension that was the same as that of Rome's Jewish Christian's idea of divine justice<sup>2</sup> in order to show them that it leads to the uni-

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<sup>1</sup> W. DABOURNE, *Purpose and Cause in Pauline Exegesis*. Roman 1.16–4.25 and a New Approach to the Letters (SNTS MS 104; Cambridge 1999); R. PENNA, *Lettera ai Romani. Rm 1–5*. Introduzione, versione, commento (Bologna 2004) I, 163–167. Also, J.N. ALETTI, *Israël et la Loi dans la lettre aux Romains* (LD 173; Paris 1998) 65–66, and the article mentioned in note 1. For DABOURNE, *Purpose*, 23, the section's purpose is essentially *theo*-logical: "It is, How can God be righteous in our sight if he justifies believing sinners without reference to the Jew-Gentile distinction?"

<sup>2</sup> Dabourne speaks of *conservative* Jews, members of the Roman community. On the composition of the Roman communities, also see PENNA, *Rm 1–5*, 25–39, who shows how Paul's discourse in Rom reflects and refers to the mixed (Judeo- and gentile-Christian) nature of this Christian group to whom the letter was written.

versal accusation of sin, to condemnation and chastisement merited by all, *without exception*. Paul would thus open his argumentation with the Jewish Christian's point of view (but also that of the Jew who had rejected the Gospel) in order to lead him to a new way of thinking. And one can willingly admit this attitude's coherence: is there a better way of convincing the addressees of a discourse than by beginning with common points of agreement?<sup>3</sup> Rather than theological or anthropological, such an interpretation is rhetorical. If Rom 1:18–3:20 is a section where Paul takes up some ideas and a vocabulary that are not ordinarily his and that have several traits in common with digressions<sup>4</sup>, one can then explain several of the affirmations that have been declared non-Pauline by many, such as Rom 2:13, or exaggerations, such as Rom 2:22.

Without immediately making a decision on the accuracy of the interpretations provided by our predecessors, we will progressively show that the rhetorical approach is truly the only one that is able to highlight the route taken by Rom 1:18–3:20, as well as its function. By following the argumentation step-by-step, emphasizing the different proofs given, their order and their progression, we will be in a position to be able to decide on the section's function. But would it not be recommended to proceed as the Ancients and Paul himself by first giving our own demonstration of the thesis (the *prothesis* or *propositio*) that we are going to defend in this essay. So here it is: if Rom 1:18–3:20 begins with reflections on divine anger and not on universal mercy, it is to avoid a prior objection that would come from a pious Jew (a disciple of Christ or not), who is the implied reader of this first argumentation; for if Paul had begun by declaring "All have sinned and must be justified by grace" (cf. Rom 3:23–24), that Jew would certainly have acquiesced, but he would have immediately added that justification by grace is nothing foreign to the Mosaic regime, that it is, in any case, completely inseparable from it. In short, regarding justification, the function of Rom 1:18–3:20 is to eliminate the Jewish exception.

## 1. The General Idea of the Argumentation's Development

The unfolding of Rom 1:18–3:20 can be laid out as follows:

(sub)propositio = Rom 1.18

"For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven  
against all ungodliness and wickedness of men [...]"

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<sup>3</sup> The *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, adds PENNA, *Rm 1–5*, 166, permits that one may begin a discourse with the adversary's thesis: "Ab adversarii dicto exordiemur" (1:10). Quintilian also says it, if I am not mistaken. But nothing in Rom 1:18–3:20 shows that the facts, the principles, and the biblical texts used are also not agreed to by Paul.

<sup>4</sup> The *parekbasis* in the technical sense of the word (PENNA, *Rm 1–5*, 165–166).

final retribution, it will be the same for the Jew whose heart is uncircumcised, as it is for the unjust non-Jew. After having dismissed a few serious misunderstandings (Rom 3:1-8), it then remains for him to show, with the help of Scripture<sup>7</sup>, that all men must be chastised and destroyed since they all have uncircumcised hearts and thus are sinners (Rom 3:9-18, cento of citations). He can then conclude that, as to justification, the Jewish exception does not exist (Rom 3:19-20).

Such is *grosso modo* the route followed by Paul in Rom 1:18–3:20. Before entering into the argumentation's details and confronting its difficulties, let us only repeat what is so important to grasp in order not to miss this section's purpose: tackling the pious Jew's unshakable certainty that the Law is for him the way of justice and life, Paul begins by faithfully taking up Judaism's ideas about retribution in order to lead his readers progressively from this point of view to where Paul wants them to go. What then is the purpose of his argumentation? The last proof from the authority of Scripture (Rom 3:9-18) may give support to those who interpret the section *anthropologically* and see reaffirmed in it, following the manner of the prophets, the perversion of all humanity. But the section's conclusion (Rom 3:19-20) shows that this scriptural proof aims only at putting the last touch on a journey for which the purpose is to arrive at the elimination of the Jewish exception concerning justification.

The firmest indication that Paul's goal was not first of all to show that all men are corrupt and sinners is found in Rom 3:19-20. Indeed, these verses, which form the conclusion of the entire argument, do not concern the desperate situation of all humanity but rather the function of the Law, which is not to justify but only to make sin known.

This first synopsis of Rom 1:18–3:20 invites careful attention to the Apostle's rhetorical techniques in order to avoid misinterpretations and not to confuse Paul's ideas with those whom he is guiding and not to accuse him too quickly of contradiction or incoherence. What remains is to follow the argumentation in order to perceive all its coherence and force.

## 2. The Starting Point (Rom 1:18, 19-32)<sup>8</sup>

### 2.1. *The (sub)propositio of Rom 1:18*

Rom 1:18 can thus be literally translated "Indeed, God's anger reveals itself from heaven (above) against all the impiety and injustice of men, those suppress-

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<sup>7</sup> Paul cannot absolutely do without the proof from scriptural authority, for only the word of God who sees hearts (stressing once again why Paul has kept this principle of retribution) can declare all men, without exception, sinners.

<sup>8</sup> I am repeating with some variations pp. 66-91 from my essay: ALETTI, *God's Justice in Romans*.

ing the truth amidst the injustice". The participle "suppressing" (τῶν κατεχόντων) being preceded by the article is the equivalent of a relative clause: "(men) who suppress (the truth)" — a determinative relative clause. Indeed, there are two types of participles that are preceded by the definite article: the determinative, if it is used to distinguish a category of persons or objects from another, in a way that is necessary not to distort the meaning, and the explicative, if it only contains a useful explanation, but is not essential to the meaning<sup>9</sup>. In Rom 1:18, the participle is determinative because it indicates the category of men on or against which the divine anger is revealed, namely, those (and they alone) who commit injustice<sup>10</sup>. The sentence is not saying that all men are unjust and impious; the universality of injustice and perversion will indeed be asserted but only in Rom 3, and one will then see why it is placed at that stage of the argumentation and not before.

The verse's rhetorical status is manifestly that of a *propositio*. It is useless to take up here what has already been established elsewhere for a long time<sup>11</sup>. If one only considers Rom 1:18–3:20, the term *propositio* causes no difficulties, but regarding the argumentation's section that covers Rom 1–8, it is better to designate Rom 1:18 as a *propositio* of a lesser or subordinate level. By calling it a *subpropositio*<sup>12</sup>, the rhetorical hierarchy can be represented as follows:

Rom 1:16-17 = general *propositio* (covering the argumentation at least until the end of Rom 8)

Rom 1:18–4:25 = first *probatio*

Rom 1:18 = *subpropositio* followed by its (*sub*)*probatio*, Rom 1:19–3:20

Rom 3:21-22 = *subpropositio* followed by its (*sub*)*probatio*, Rom 3:23–4:25

Rom 5:1–8:39 = second *probatio*, etc.

<sup>9</sup> The construction is the same in Rom 2:9, 14; 8:33, 34; 16:22: "noun + article + participle" in the same case, gender, and number. For the sequence "article + noun + article + participle" (agreeing in case, gender, and number), see Rom 3:5; 12:3, 6; 15:15.

<sup>10</sup> In Rom 2:9, the designation is the same as in 1:18, and the participle is determinative as well.

<sup>11</sup> J.N. ALETTI, "Rm 1,18–3,20", *Bib* 69 (1988) 47-62, and the most recent commentaries on Pauline rhetoric.

<sup>12</sup> R. JEWETT, *Romans*. A Commentary (Minneapolis, MN 2007) 150, reproached me for having used elsewhere the term *propositio* for Rom 1:18 and thus provoking confusion with Rom 1:16-17, which is the general *propositio* of Rom. To get around the difficulty, he himself proposes to call Rom 1:18 *thesis*. The inconvenience of this last appellation is that it does not give the proper value to the rhetorical hierarchy of the letter and the connection that exists between Rom 1:16-17 and Rom 1:18.

Since the phrase *orgē theou* (“God’s wrath”) and the idea of divine anger appear in the LXX but also in non-biblical writings, and with an isolated reading of v. 18, it is difficult to know which of these two constitutes the backdrop of the *probatio* that follows. The difficulty is the same for whoever wishes to determine immediately the meaning of the term *orgē* (*affectus*, an angry reaction, or rather *effectus*, an act of punishment<sup>13</sup>) as well as the connection between divine anger and divine justice, between anger in history and eschatological anger, etc. The meaning of Rom 1:18, as well as that of most of the Pauline *propositiones* and *subpropositiones*, can only be determined progressively and retrospectively as the *probatio* is developed. Thus, it is necessary to follow the *probatio* to know the meaning of Rom 1:18 better and the purpose of the *pericope*, a term Jewett uses to refer to Rom 1:18–3:20.

If, as we have said above, Paul’s goal is to eliminate the Jewish exception regarding justification, why does not his *subpropositio* clearly indicate this aim from the beginning in order to avoid his readers’ misunderstanding? If he had immediately shown his cards, he would have at the least antagonized those who were convinced of being just and justified by their obedience to the Law. In short, the formulation of Rom 1:18 must be acceptable to pious Jews.

## 2.2. Proof through the facts (Rom 1:19–32)

Several exegetes name this first proof *narratio*<sup>14</sup> because of its narrative traits. But this does not suffice for it to be a discursive *narratio*, in the sense given by the rhetorical treatises of the time, according to which *narrationes* prepare, but only partially, the *probatio*. And since this designation may lead to confusion, it seems preferable to speak of a *proof through the facts*. Indeed, one cannot but agree that Rom 1:19–32 has as its function the establishment of the validity of the *subpropositio*, 1:18, namely that God punishes those who commit injustice because He has already punished in the past and in the present. It is His reactions in the past and in the present that thus allow the inference that there will be a *day of wrath* (Rom 2:5), for if this anger had never been manifested, how could one definitely expect it at the end of time? Indeed, Paul must first show that, until the present, God has not left evil unpunished, that He has always reacted against those who refuse to recognize Him; if there has not been chastisement (thus anger) in response to human injustice, how can one say that God will definitely punish evil? By relying on the facts that are described in the biblical and Jewish traditions<sup>15</sup>,

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<sup>13</sup> The Latin terms are borrowed from PENNA, *Rm 1-5*, 173.

<sup>14</sup> I myself have used this appellation in ALETTI, “Rm 1,18–3,20”.

<sup>15</sup> At every possible opportunity, recent commentaries emphasize all the *topoi* taken up by Paul in Rom 1:19–32, from the allusions to the events in the desert (v. 23, which takes up a formulation for Psa 105/106:20) to the lists of vices in vv. 29–32.

and thus real and undeniable facts, Rom 1:19-32 shows that God has already exerted His anger and how He has exerted it, thus indicating that one can expect its final manifestation.

What are the traits of divine anger in Rom 1:19-32? It is implicitly presented as a just reaction — anger and divine justice are not opposed to each other — since, as Paul states in vv. 20-21, the attitude of the impious and unjust is inexcusable. Thus, God does not chastise irresponsible beings, acting out of ignorance, but beings capable of knowing and respecting Him. The second trait of this anger is that it is measured. If it unfolds here in three waves of increasing strength<sup>16</sup>, it is presented as a proportionate negative reaction, through a negative transformation of human relations, though not extreme, through total destruction. Without a doubt, this indicates that God is patient and does not wish the destruction of His creatures. This non-destruction also permits the argumentation to extend to and turn toward the ultimate judgment in Rom 2 — let us recall that if the divine final judgment is not mentioned in Rom 1:19-32, it is because Rom 1:19-32 recalls *past* and *present* facts.

The third trait: who are the recipients of this anger? All who have done evil according to the same terms of the *subpropositio* of 1:18. But their origin and number are not given. Regarding the recipients' origin, pagan and/or Jew, the passage is not explicit. According to most ancient and recent commentaries, Rom 1:19-32 is about the pagans because the vices that are described are those for which Jews condemn pagans<sup>17</sup>. But Paul does not utilize the word *ethnē* (nations); moreover, in v. 23 he makes an allusion to Israel's idolatry in the desert<sup>18</sup>. Without a doubt, the Israel of Paul's day is convinced of having driven away all idolatry,

<sup>16</sup> In vv. 24, 26 and 28. The sequence is as follows: (a) human behavior vv. 19-23/divine reaction v. 24; (b) human behavior v. 25/divine reaction vv. 26-27; (c) human behavior v. 28a/divine reaction vv. 28b-31. The effects of the divine reaction are described more and more at length.

<sup>17</sup> At every possible opportunity, commentaries point out that Rom 1:19-32 repeats the Jewish stereotypes: (1) the knowledge of God based on the world (Wis 13:1ff; *Letter of Aristeas*, 132; cf. PHILO, *De praemiis et poenis*, 41-44; *Legum allegoriae*, III.99), (2) the rejection of recognizing God and idolatry (Wis 11:15-16; 13-15; *Letter of Aristeas*, 133-138; *Sibylline Oracles*, 276-279), (3) immorality as a consequence of idolatry (Wis 14:12, 22-26; *Letter of Aristeas*, 152; *TestNephtali*, 3-4; *Sibylline Oracles*, 3:29-35; 4:34), (4) a call to conversion, as in Rom 2:4-5 (Wis 11:23; 12:10, 18-19; *2Bar* 21:20; *4Esd* 7:132-139), (5) divine retribution and final judgment (Wis 14:31; *Letter of Aristeas*, 131; *Sibylline Oracles*, 3:762-767; 4:35-45), (6) a list of vices and a statement of judgment (Wis 14:22-31; *Gal* 5:19-21; *Col* 3:5-6; *Eph* 5:3-5; *Rev* 22:15; *1Peter* 4:3-5).

<sup>18</sup> The allusion to *Psa* 105/106:20 is accepted by all the commentaries.



but by not mentioning either pagans or Jews and by staying with a generic and distributive denominative (“the men who [...]”), Paul prevents all precipitous designations. Certainly, the sexual disorders named in vv. 29-32 were principally those of the pagans of that time, but is that what Paul wanted to emphasize? For he does not attribute them to the pagans explicitly, and he recalls only that in these aberrations and these vices, one truly recognizes a mark of divine anger and thus a manifestation of its existence. That is what the argumentation shows above all. Let us also repeat that the expression used in 1:18 “the men who” is, moreover, not made more clear in 1:19-32. The description can give the impression that very many unjust men were and are struck by divine anger, but it does not allow the conclusion that all men of the past were, without exception, impious and unjust and for that reason chastised.

One can also be astonished by the manner in which Paul treats the theme of human injustice that he begins in Rom 1:18. For when the biblical and non-biblical traditions speak of injustice, it is above all to stigmatize the relationships between men: dishonesty in their affairs, exploitation of the poor, etc. Well, Rom 1:19-32 speaks only of impiety (in Greek, *asebeia*). It is also mentioned in 1:18, where it is a refusal to recognize and venerate God. The passage sees in this the root of all evils; it is because of this that the relationships between men have become perverse, for God, rejected by His creatures, has handed them over to each other, which has caused disorder at every level<sup>19</sup>. This being said, the Apostle is not breaking new ground, and recent commentaries indicate that he only wants to take up, in a stereotypical manner, some *topoi* that are found in the Jewish writings from the period of the Second Temple. Thus, one does not find in Rom 1 the heart of Paul’s thought on the natural knowledge of God, or original sin, or the connection between the rejection of God and sexual disorder, etc. This phenomenon of repetition confirms the hypothesis that Paul begins his argumentation with the ideas on retribution of the Judaism of his time for the reasons mentioned above.

### 3. The Principles of Divine Retribution (Rom 2)

Rom 2 is divided into two large units, vv. 1-16 and 17-29, which each progress in two stages — first (A = vv. 1-8 and A’ = vv. 17-24), where Paul calls attention to the contradictions of those that he addresses in order to then (B = vv. 9-16 and B’ = vv. 25-29) draw out the consequences that concern the questions of religious identity and to show more and more explicitly that the differences between Jew

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<sup>19</sup> The vices mentioned in Rom 1:19-32 are not the cause of injustice but an effect of divine punishment; cf. vv. 24 and 26 where this is explicitly said.

and non-Jew are less sharp than thought. The following table schematically indicates the different components and their arrangement<sup>20</sup>:

	<b>A (2:1-8)</b>	<b>A' (2:17-24)</b>
<i>Apostrophe</i> <i>Saying</i>	whoever you are negative: whom do you judge?	you, Jew positive: where are you seeking glory?
<i>Regarding</i> <i>Contradiction</i>	Others in judging others you condemn yourself: in judging, you do the same things.	Yourself while teaching others you do not teach yourself; you preached against stealing, but you steal (3x)
<i>Dishonoring God</i>	not recognizing the goodness of God	you dishonor God
<i>Use of Scripture</i>	v. 6: allusion to Ps 61[62]: 13 [13]	v. 24 cites Isa 52:5
	<b>B (2:9-16)</b>	<b>B' (2:25-29)</b>
<i>Identity</i>	the Jew first, and then the Greek	the visible Jew; the secret Jew
<i>the Law</i>	outside the Law/within the Law; doing what the Law requires	practicing and observing the Law
<i>Inscription/heart</i>	inscribed on their hearts	circumcision of the heart, not according to the letter
<i>What God does</i>	God judges secrets	praise [...] from God

<sup>20</sup> If according to all the commentaries, the text progresses in two stages, vv. 1-16 and 17-29, there is no agreement on the internal disposition of the first part, for many see it divided thusly: vv. 1-11 and 12-16. According to some of them, the composition of vv. 7-10 would be *chiastic*: *a* = v. 7 (positive retribution), *b* = v. 8 (negative retribution), *b'* = v. 9 (negative retribution), *a'* = 10 (negative retribution), and they add that a chiasm should not be taken apart. Actually, it is a *reversio*, of which the two halves do not belong to the same literary unit, vv. 7-8 develop v. 6 (God repays according to each action), and vv. 9-10 prepare the statements on impartiality (vv. 11-16). Two clues confirm the *reversio*: (i) the asyndeton at the beginning of v. 9 and the inversion of the syntactical elements (addressees + retributions in vv. 7-8; retributions + addressees in vv. 9-10); (ii) in vv. 9-10, Paul inserts the Jew/Greek pair that is explained in the proof of v. 11 on impartiality. Verse 11 only makes sense on justification if it is linked to vv. 9-10 on the equal retribution of Jew and Greek: They are logically and rhetorically inseparable. Finally, if the second unit begins with v. 9, the parallel progression of the two parts that each end with the identical question (Jew/non-Jew) is all the more highlighted. The close correspondence between vv. 1-16 and 17-29 prevents their separation, as was unfortunately done by M.A. SEIFRID, "Unrighteous by Faith. Apostolic Proclamation in Romans 1:18-3:20", *Justification and Variegated Nomism. The Paradoxes of Paul* (eds. D.A. CARSON – P.T. O'BRIEN – M. SEIFRID) (WUNT 2.181; Tübingen 2004) II, 126-135.

speaks only of anger in response to injustice and impiety. According to certain interpreters, Paul is contradicting himself: if he wishes to show that all men are, without any exception, liable to divine anger, how can he admit to the existence of good men in Rom 2:14 and 2:27a?<sup>23</sup> But let us not forget that Paul is following and relying upon the principles that are the Law's, recognized and defended by pious Jews: the point of view is still that of the Jew! Far from reflecting an incoherency, this enlargement is necessary for the argumentation, for it completes the data on retributive divine justice. Indeed, up to now, he has spoken only of those who do evil and for that they deserve to be struck by anger. But, for those who do good, what will He do? Will God distinguish between Jews and non-Jews? Will He glorify the first and ignore the good deeds of the others? The answer is clear: the principle of retribution according to deeds must *also* be applied to good deeds. Will this principle thus cancel the distinction between Jew and non-Jew or in the Apostle's words between Jew and Greek? By (still) not asking the question, Paul is evidently not responding to it. But in order to explain the reasons for which "glory, honor and peace" will be given to whoever does good, to Jew as well as to Greek, Paul states the second principle that characterizes retributive divine justice, that of impartiality (v. 11), equally taken from biblical and Jewish traditions<sup>24</sup>.

### 3.2. *The Progression of the Principles*

The principle of impartiality, which is apparently egalitarian, does not initially remove the difference between Jews and non-Jews ("the Jew first, then the Greek", vv. 9-10) since God will punish without the Law the pagan who does not have the Law, and according to the Law, the Jew who is its subject (v. 12). Does not impartiality consist of taking into account their status and respecting it? Should God judge the non-Jew as if he were a Jew, and repay the non-Jew according to the rules of the Jewish law even though he is not its subject? Thus, the impartial God

<sup>23</sup> See in particular E.P. SANDERS, *Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People* (Philadelphia 1985) 123-135; H. RÄISÄNEN, *Paul and the Law* (WUNT 29; Tübingen 1983) 97-109.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Deut 10:17; 1S 16:7; 2Ch 19:6-7; Job 34:19; Prov 18:5; 24:23-25; 28:21; Psa 81/82:1-4; Mal 2:9. On the impartiality that must (or should) be used by judges, see Lev 19:15; Deut 1:17; 10:17; 16:19; 28:50; Isa 23:6-8; Psa 81/82:2; etc. The future king announced in Isa 11:3 will judge neither according to appearances nor intentions. The idea is the same in the deuterocanonical books and the pseudepigrapha: Sir 4:22, 27; 35:12-18; Wis 6:7; 1En 63:8-9; TestJob 4:7-9; 43:13; 1Esd 4:39; Jubilees 5:12-16; 21:3-5; PsSal 2:15-18; 2:32-35; 2Bar 13:8-12; 44:2-4; also, Biblical Antiquities 20:3-4. The idea is also found in the NT: Acts 10:34; 15:8-9; Jas 2:1, 9; 1P 1:17; applied to Jesus in Mat 22:16 = Mark 12:14 = Luke 20:21. Elsewhere in Paul: Gal 2:6; Rom 2:11; Col 3:25; Eph 6:9.

is not going to ignore the difference in status, but He is going to apply it impartially: the non-Jew will be judged according to his deeds, but not according to the Jewish law, and the Jew according to the deeds that the Law demands of him to do<sup>25</sup>. This means that the phraseology of Rom 2:12 does not permit an immediate inference that the difference in status implies a difference in the reward or the punishment because the difference is situated at the level of the modalities of the retribution, for Paul only mentions the judgment of the Jew who is subject to the Law. Despite this critical difference — without the Law for the non-Jew and according to the Law for the Jew — the principle of impartiality remains, nevertheless, a result that is going to be progressively used by Paul: if a non-Jew, who does not know the Law, follows what his conscience dictates, and in this way does the works that the Law requires without being aware of it, he obeys the commandments required by God, and so the latter will reward him as a consequence! With the two principles that He Himself determined (in the Law) for retribution, God is thus going to reward the non-Jew by reason of behavior that is that of a Jew (v. 13); and if it is the behavior that conforms to the Law that determines the positive retribution of the non-Jew, the status of the latter does not matter. One gets the idea that Paul is going to be able to use the connection between these two principles.

But it is at the same moment when he takes up the biblical principles that Paul, in Rom 2:13 (“For it is not the hearers of the Law who are righteous before God, but the doers of the Law who will be justified”), seems to be going against all the passages where he says that no one is justified by the practice of the Law<sup>26</sup>. Certain commentators think that it is necessary to reject this in order to establish a total coherence between the Apostle’s affirmations<sup>27</sup> because they do not see how the remarks of Rom 2:13 and those that are going to follow Rom 3:21 and in which

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<sup>25</sup> This is where the expression “works of the Law” comes from, the meaning of which has been analyzed by, among others, M. ABEGG, “Paul, ‘Works of the Law’ and 4 QMMT”, *Biblical Archeologist Reader* 20 (1994) 52-55; J.D.G. DUNN, “4QMMT and Galatians”, *NTS* 43 (1997) 147-153; PENNA, “Le ‘opere della Legge’”, 155-176; M. PÉREZ FERNÁNDEZ, “4QMMT: Redactional Study”, *RQ* 70 (1997) 191-205; M. PARKER, “4QMMT und Galaterbrief”, *ZNW* 89 (1998) 91-113; J. BERNARD, “Pour lire 4QMMT. Quelques-unes des mises en pratique de la Torah”, *Le judaïsme à l’aube de l’ère chrétienne. XVIIIe congrès de l’ACFEB* (Lyon, septembre 1999) (P. ABADIE – J.-P. LÉMONON) (LD 186; Paris 2001) 63-94; DE ROO, “The Concept of ‘Works of the Law’ ”.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Rom 3:20: “For no human being will be justified in his sight by works of the law”; Gal 2:16: “yet who know that a man is not justified by works of the law”; Gal 3:11; 5:4.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. the authors already noted above, SANDERS, *Paul, the Law and the Jewish People*, 123-125; RÄISÄNEN, *Paul and the Law*, 97-109; in addition, F. REFOULÉ, “Unité de l’épître aux Romains et histoire du salut”, *RSPT* 71 (1987) 219-242.

this same Law does not give life, but only divine anger (Rom 4:15a), can be reconciled. But these criticisms are without merit; indeed, they forget that up to now the Apostle is happy to portray the traits of just divine retribution by taking up textually the biblical principles accepted by a potential Jewish interlocutor. The affirmation of Rom 2:13 is only comprehensible in the argumentation's dynamic that begins by faithfully taking up the biblical and Jewish *topoi* relative to final divine retribution. Rather than accuse Paul of incoherence, it is much better to ask why he takes up these biblical and Jewish principles on retributive divine justice. Now, Rom 2:13 is of a decisive importance in the argumentation because it permits Paul to consider the case of non-Jews who are not subject to the Law and yet do the good that this same Law requires of its subjects. By mentioning that some non-Jews are able to do good (that conforms to the Law) by following the inner law of their conscience, Paul touches upon a point that is going to become essential in the second part of the chapter — namely, the connection of cause and effect between conscience (interior) and behavior (exterior) because a just retribution must not ignore this connection. Can good behavior that could be dictated by a perverse intention (deceit, vanity, etc.) be agreeable to God?

It is this interior/exterior connection that states the third principle (Rom 2:15-16): God rewards with justice, for He sees at the same time the interior, the heart from whence comes the motivations, and the exterior, good or bad behavior. The principle completes the preceding one and is inseparable from it: retribution will be made according to the secret intentions, according to what comes from the heart (Rom 2:16). Here still, in reconciling impartiality and knowledge of the secrets of the heart, Paul is not being innovative<sup>28</sup>. Impartiality and knowledge of the heart go together, for impartiality consists of not being seduced by appearances. And it is because He is the only one who knows hearts where covetousness dwells, malice but also goodness and purity, that God is truly impartial. In allying these two traits of divine justice, Paul is going to be able from now on to arrive at the point where he has been heading since the beginning: to show that if one takes into account the secrets of the heart, there is not a sharp separation between Jew and non-Jew.

### 3.3. *The Case of the Jew and the Argumentation's Progression*

In Rom 1:19-32, as we have seen, Paul does not say that all men are bearers of the vices he lists and are targets of divine punishment. Against this frequent judg-

<sup>28</sup> God alone knows the heart of men. 1Sam 16:7; 1Kgs 8:39; Jer 11:20; 12:3; Jer 17:10 (notice the connection between the knowledge of hearts and just retribution); the same observation for Jer 20:12; also see Psalms 7:10; 16/17:3; 43/44:22; 63/64:7-8; 138/139:23; Prov 15:11; 17:3; 21:2; 24:12.

ment<sup>29</sup>, it is necessary to repeat that in Rom 2, he is not designating the rest of humans by saying “all the others!”, but only (*all*) *those* who are in opposition to their ideals<sup>30</sup>. In short, the arguments of Rom 2 are not aiming at all men.

According to several of the commentaries, the addressees of the apostrophes of Rom 2 are the Jews. Such a reading does not see how Paul progresses in the designation: it is only beginning in Rom 2:17 that the last negative group is presented, that of the Jews who preach the good but act contrary to it. Paul is not precise about their number<sup>31</sup>. Without a doubt, there is an allusion to the Jew from Rom 2:1 since there Paul says: “O man, whoever you are, when you judge another” — “whoever you are”, meaning as what follows indicates “the Jew first and also the Greek” (2:9-10). In Rom 2, the progression regarding the moral discourse is also qualitative, for it goes from the criticism of evil to the instruction of the good:

	<i>saying</i>	<i>doing</i>
2:1-5	you who judge evil	and do evil
2:17-24	you who preach good (the Law)	and do evil

Verses 17-24 are still wrongly understood by the majority of commentators, for according to them, Paul denounces all Jews. If he is aiming at all of them, that would also mean faithful and pious Jews. Then the argumentation would miss its target, for the goal of Rom 2 is to lead the reader to the only criterion according to which somebody is and may be declared righteous, namely, circumcision of the heart (which is not only for the Jew). Because of impartiality, God can only take that into account. If the number of those who are apostrophized is not mentioned, their origin is now emphasized: Jews *and* non-Jews (Greeks) can belong to one or the other category, doing good or doing evil: they will receive the retributions that are respectively tied to each.

In 2:17-29, the Law is not presented as a list of prohibitions; it is not given to provoke fear of chastisement: it is not the instrument of divine judgment but an expression of the divine will that permits the Jew to know God. It determines the vocation of the Jew, who by obeying the divine will becomes responsible for the

<sup>29</sup> See the blunt judgment of SANDERS, *Paul, the Law and the Jewish People*, 125: “Paul’s case for universal sinfulness as it is stated in Rm. 1:18–2:29 is not convincing: it is internally inconsistent and it rests on gross exaggeration”.

<sup>30</sup> Recently, P. SPITALER, *Universale Sünde von Juden und Heiden* (FzB 109; Würzburg 2006) 23-24 and 32-33, has also shown that in Rom 1–2 the argumentation is not aimed at all men but only the non-Jews and the Jews who commit serious faults that render them sinners.

<sup>31</sup> One will note that Paul deletes the adjective “all” from the unit concerning Jews (2:17-29).



rest of humanity. But Paul emphasizes the serious sins, for practically they make the Jew who commits them a pagan and a sinner. Several commentators, already noted, think that the Apostle here exaggerates heavily and that his critique in going so far loses all pertinence. How many Jews have robbed the pagan temples (Rom 2:22)? But where does the Apostle say that *all* Jews have committed and are still committing such acts? Actually, it is less important for him to know how many are in this situation than to know that the Jewish identity disappears with such acts, and thus that divine retribution will be operable as a consequence. The Jewish sinner, at the final judgment, will not escape the chastisement that he merits: his Jewish identity will absolutely not protect him from the anger.

If vv. 17-24 insist on the clear identity of the Jew, in vv. 25-29 Paul returns to the differences and the fluid boundaries. The vocabulary of circumcision and uncircumcision, which serves to determine the differences between Jew and non-Jew, is intentionally used, for as is known, since the prophets, circumcision of the heart permits the determination of what is just and what is not. And Paul is really going to arrive at an ultimate reversal of the status when he affirms that, if the non-Jew has a circumcised heart and the Jew an uncircumcised, God, by virtue of his impartiality, will treat the Jew as a pagan and the pagan as a Jew.

In short, if Rom 1:18-3:20 is so interested in distributive divine justice, it is to arrive at the conclusion that the differences in status will not be of importance on the Day of Judgment. In other words, the theme of judgment is eminently functional. It serves to show that by virtue of His impartiality, God must repay according to hearts. This permits the Apostle to insist that religious status can be apparent — but provisional and fragile. By doing this, let us repeat, Paul neither is nor wants to be original: some other Jewish authors also questioned the pertinence of being Jewish. One can say without a doubt that their conclusions can differ from Paul's, even if they recognize that a Jew that has become a sinner — in the strong sense, that is separated from God — will not be in a better place than a pagan at the time of final judgment. They, by no means, relativize physical circumcision, necessary for belonging to the people of the covenant. But where does Paul say in Rom 2 that circumcision serves for nothing? It is useless, but only for the Jew who becomes a sinner. The Apostle's reasoning does not consist in minimizing the Jew's privileges — at the beginning of Rom 3, he refutes that he has such an intention, only to recall clearly that the privileges are of no use to those who do not live according to the demands that accompany them. And, on this point, the pertinence of his argumentation cannot be invalidated since it rests on the biblical principles of divine justice.



#### 4. The Proof from Authority (Rom 3:1-20)

##### 4.1. *The Situation at the End of Rom 2*

Up to the end of Rom 2, Paul thus faithfully follows the biblical and Jewish categories to show that the impartial God will not reward according to the exterior statuses, only according to the circumcision of the heart<sup>32</sup>. But if his argumentation really shows that whatever may be their status, Jew or non-Jew, sinners will receive the same chastisement, he still has not eradicated the certitude that the pious Jew will be spared from anger and benefit from divine blessings. For, even if he sins, the pious Jew knows that he does not belong to the category of sinners and the impious. In other words, Rom 2 should be recognized as purely and simply comprising a negation of the Jewish particularity<sup>33</sup>. For by making the Law his delight, the pious Jew knows how to count on the divine mercy and to receive the fate reserved by God for the faithful of His people. Thus, he is not awaiting a manifestation of divine justice other than the one revealed by the Law. He may sin, but he knows how to rely on divine mercy. In order to be just, God must give him justice so that he can exercise justice and equality by observing the statutes of the Law. After all, would not an impracticable divine law be unjust or would it not ratify the powerlessness of the Law Maker? Because for the Jew, the Law has its procedures for purifying its cultic system, its required expiations: provided that he recognizes his sin and does penance, the pious Jew is certain of forgiveness. For him, the just judge is not only the one who examines conducts and hearts, who equitably sanctions, but also and above all, the one who promotes justice by pardoning and arousing in the heart of the faithful the love of His Law. How is Paul going to show that he (and he above all) also is not in a better position than the others and must wait for the Gospel?

##### 4.2. *The Function of Rom 3 in the Argumentation*

To come to the suppression of the Jewish exception, Paul chooses to show that, faced with final divine justice, the situation of the Jew is the same as that of those

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<sup>32</sup> It is useless and erroneous to see in Rom 1:18–2:29 a post-Pauline interpolation, as is done by W.O. WALKER, Jr., “Romans 1:18–2:29. A Non-Pauline Interpolation?”, *NTS* 45 (1999) 533–552 (this author follows, by enlarging the first two chapters of Romans, the ideas of J.C. O’Neill, in his 1975 commentary on Romans).

<sup>33</sup> According to PENNA, *Rm 1–5*, 266, at the end of Rom 2, Paul has shown that “between Jew and Gentile there is no difference with regard to God’s retributive justice”. Actually, the Jewish exception has still not disappeared, and it cannot until Paul shows that all Jews *without exception* have uncircumcised hearts. And to do this, recourse to Scripture is necessary.

categories that up to now have been reviewed. In this way, Rom 3 constitutes a turning point; for the Apostle no longer speaks as in the preceding developments of “all men who [...]” but of “all men” *without exception* (Rom 3:4, 9, 12, 19). All Jews, even the pious ones, thus find themselves grouped with the sinners<sup>34</sup>, the evildoers, who are corrupt and merit divine anger.

So how is Paul going to proceed in order to show, in some way, the impossible? He is no longer able to rely on principles, even if they are biblical, nor affirm his own authority that even the Jews who boast of being faithful or pious are deluded and are not so<sup>35</sup>. Not being God, and thus not being able to see hearts, Paul himself is unable to accuse all men of belonging to the category of sinners. He must submit to the judgment of Scripture, the Word of God, by using biblical passages that emphasize the total and universal perversion of humans. Thus, he arrives at the end of his presentation: if all without exception, Jew and non-Jew, rank as sinners and thus are in the process by being destroyed, it is justification that must be granted to all in the same manner. Thus, only a divine word, a prophetic oracle that attests that all humans without exception are depraved from head to toe, permits him to say that it is so. For God alone is able to make such a judgment. One understands why 3:10-18 uses a long biblical citation to support such decisive affirmations.

Paul’s argumentation may be misunderstood and unfortunately has been. The affirmation “Each man (is) a liar” of v. 4 comes from Psa 115/116:11, where the oppressed psalmist remembers “I said in my consternation, every man is a liar”, and constitutes the first declaration on the universality of human sin and prepares the scriptural proof of vv. 10-18. For in these verses, Paul reaches the most difficult point of his exposition: is it true that all Jews sin, lying and committing injustice, to the point of being accused and seeing themselves declared sinners by God (v. 7)?

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<sup>34</sup> Rom 3, in particular vv. 9-20, does not show “the universality of sin”, as A. PITTA, *La lettera ai Romani* (Libri biblici NT 6; Milano 2001) 144, says following many others; indeed, according to the Jewish categories, sin does not necessarily separate one from God since even the just sin. One will retort without a doubt that in Rom 3:22-23 Paul affirms: “For there is no distinction; since *all have sinned* and fall short of the glory of God”. Certainly, but stated at the beginning of Rom 3, this declaration would not have been either pertinent or true, for Rom 2 has not yet established — such was not its function — that all were sinners and impious, and thus that to sin is the equivalent of being a sinner.

<sup>35</sup> According to J.D.G. DUNN, *Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids, MI 1998) 155 “In the indictment in Rom 1:18–3:20 the criticism focused more or less entirely on a Jewish sense of privilege over the Gentiles, marked by boasting in possession of the law and the benefits it provided”. This motivation is insufficient, for the difficulty is less what the pious Jew feels than the salvific exception that carries with it privileges. The Law dispenses with the necessity of finding salvation elsewhere than in the Mosaic system.

Does not the latter see our humanity composed of a single category, that of sinners? It is with this conclusion that the end of the argumentation effectively arrives in Rom 3:10-20. But are we not faced with an even greater exaggeration than those revealed in Rom 2?

To arrive at this, Paul has only followed the principles according to which divine justice presents itself in Scripture, in order to conclude logically that if the state of sin (or of the sinner) goes beyond the statuses and privileges regarding retribution, it remains to be seen if there exists humans who escape the category of sinners. But if, with the help of Scripture, Paul is able henceforth to put all humanity in the same negative situation, *without exception or privilege*, it is not to overwhelm the creatures and enhance the glory of the Creator, but to prepare for the statement of Rom 3:21: the absence of differences in the face of retribution permits divine justice graciously to affect all humans *in the same manner, by faith alone, in virtue of the principle of impartiality that has underlain the argumentation* since Rom 2:11; no one is excluded — above all not the faithful Jew who has awaited it for such a long time! The argumentation's purpose must not be lost sight of when one reads Rom 3:1-20: it is to establish his doctrine of *impartial* and gracious justification by faith alone that Paul must show that all, Jews and non-Jews, are in the same category or the same situation. By giving the argumentation that goes from Rom 1:18 to 3:20 the heading of the genre "All men are sinners", the commentaries simply cause the reader to make a mistake because they only recall the ultimate proof from the Scriptures, giving the impression that it determines the purpose of the section.

#### 4.3. *The Scriptural Proof and Its Pertinence*

Rom 3:9-18 is, as noted by all commentaries, a cento of citations:

- vv. 10-12b = Psa 13/14:1-3: the accent is placed on the universality of evil
- v. 13a = Psa 5:10 total depravity of throat and tongue
- v. 13b = Psa 139/140:4 lips
- v. 14 = Psa 9:28 mouth
- vv. 15-17 = Isa 59:7-8 feet and ways
- v. 18 (repetition of vv. 10-12) = Psa 35/36:1

Paul begins by insisting on universality (cf. "not one" and "all") in vv. 10-12 then in vv. 13-17, on the fact that in each human all is perverted (from top to bottom: throat, tongue, lips, mouth, feet — symbolizing what is said and done).

Since Paul invokes the word of God, it is important to ask if he uses it correctly, if he does not force it. And without a doubt it is the most delicate phase of the exegesis because if the biblical passages are correctly cited, nevertheless, the evil-

doers of whom it speaks do not seem to be a part of the people of God, as is shown by Psa 13:4 LXX: “Have they no knowledge, all the evildoers who eat up *my people* as they eat bread, and do not call upon the Lord?”. The people of God thus endure disgrace and are not described as being on the side of the bad. Is it then legitimate to apply the “all” of v. 2 to all men without exception, especially to the pious Jews, as Paul does? For if he relies on these passages, it is really to show that there is no Jewish exception. Thus, the text appealed to by the Apostle does not seem to prove that all humanity, here comprised by Israelites faithful to the Law, is perverse from head to toe. Nevertheless, a closer examination of the biblical connection shows that Paul has carefully articulated the chosen passages; for actually, the biblical texts cited do not declare only pagans as wicked and perverse. If Rom 3:10b-12 is truly about the latter, by contrast, Rom 3:15-17 and Isa 59:7-8 (and Isa 59 in its entirety) denounce the same perversion in Israel. The two groups that compose humanity are really in the same sinful situation, fundamentally separated from God:

	<b>Pagans</b>	<b>Impious</b>	<b>Israel</b>
Psa 13:1-3 LXX	Rom 3:10b-12		
Psa 5:10; 9:28 LXX		Rom 3:13-14	
Isa 59:7-9			Rom 3:15-17

As the arrangement of the chart suggests, the intermediary citations of Psa 5 and 9 (LXX) that speak of the ungodly in general, without saying to which group they belong, take all their authority from the citations that surround them and manifestly concern pagans *and* Israel.

Certainly, one may still object that even though the verses of Isaiah cited are materially pertinent, they are talking about a group in its entirety without naming *all* the subjects of the Law. The objection is not valid to the extent that the surrounding verses, like Isa 59:4 (“No one enters suit justly, no one goes to law honestly; they rely on empty pleas, they speak lies, they conceive mischief and bring forth iniquity”), also show that the corruption has reached the whole world. In short, by these scriptural proofs, Paul has obtained what he wanted: namely, to establish that all men, without exception, pagans and Jews, are faced with the same situation when it comes to divine retribution and that there is no exception. His success in overcoming the Jewish soteriological exception results in his paraphrasing Psa 142/143:2: “No human being will be justified in His sight by the deeds of the Law” (Rom 3:20).

## Conclusions

Thus, we can determine the function of Rom 1:18–3:20. If Paul begins with anger and follows with the Last Judgment, it is not to provoke fear, to accuse or

condemn, but to eliminate the Jewish exception by explaining the objections that could be made against the equal situation of the Jew and the Greek concerning final retribution. In the end, the Apostle can affirm that since all are in the same situation, God's impartial justice must treat them in the same way. But for the Apostle, this result is only a stage, and thanks to it, from now on, he is going to return to the statement: if for the coming anger there is no exception, impartiality must also apply to the gift of justification (Rom 3:21–4:25).

Undoubtedly, it was useful to reread the preceding chapters of Romans, namely, Rom 1:18–3:20, still frequently misunderstood and presented in an erroneous way. A better understanding of them has an immediate effect of not misinterpreting the theology of justification in Romans. It is Paul's thoughts and argumentations on justification that henceforth we are going to follow.

study<sup>11</sup>, I have avoided taking a position on the two genitives, objective and subjective, and preferred to speak of a genitive of qualification, indicating as well, for Paul justification, faith and Jesus Christ are henceforth inseparable.

Before going into the proofs in vv. 23-26, let us see how vv. 21-22 determine the arrangement of the passage.

<i>propositio</i> /thesis v. 21	But now, apart from the Law, the righteousness of God has been manifested, attested by the Law and the Prophets,
<i>partitio</i> /announcement v. 22	a) the righteousness of God (divine origin) b) through faith in Jesus Christ/through faithfulness of Jesus Christ (instrumental cause) c) for all who believe (recipients)
first <i>ratio</i>	For there is no distinction;
development or proofs from the facts vv. 23-26	C) <sup>23</sup> since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, <sup>24</sup> they are justified by his grace as a gift (recipients = all humans), B) through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, <sup>25</sup> whom God put forward as an expiation by his blood, (effective) through faith (instrumental cause). A) (This was) to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins; <sup>26</sup> it was to prove at the present time that he himself is righteous and that he justifies the one who has faith in Jesus (the purpose of the divine act).

This arrangement requires a brief commentary: (i) v. 22 is a part of the *propositio*; it makes visible the components that v. 21 leaves in the shadows, but as it also announces the developments that will follow, it is for this reason also a *partitio*; (ii) The reader will have noted the *reversio*, in other words, how the components of the *propositio/partitio* are repeated in inverse order in the explanations or the proofs provided in vv. 23-26; (iii) element A (vv. 25b-26) is more developed, pointing out that Paul is going to emphasize the coherence and the continuity of divine justice — God has not changed, His justice has always been exercised in the same manner — as the example of Abraham is going to demonstrate.

## 2. The Proof from the Facts: the Work of God in Christ

The preparation of the themes in v. 22 and their inverse repetition in vv. 23-26 clearly indicate that the passage is rhetorically unified and was composed by the Apostle. This final redacted unit does not exclude, however, borrowings from one or some anterior traditions. Indeed, commentators consistently highlight that vv. 23-24 are Paul's and that vv. 25-26 come from an anterior tradition, taken up and reformulated by the Apostle<sup>12</sup>. More than the origin of the borrowings, which is still

<sup>11</sup> ALETTI, *God's Justice in Romans*, 114.

<sup>12</sup> On the repetition and assimilation of an anterior tradition in vv. 25-26a, see the monograph of G. PULCINELLI, *La morte di Gesù come espiazione*. La concezione paulina (Studi sulla



Two substantives, above all, have held the attention of exegetes, *boasting* (καύχησις) and *principle* (νόμος). As one knows, boasting, by itself, is not the equivalent of pride, and thus is not a vice, in short, does not have a negative connotation. As has been written, "Boasting in Rom 3,27 [and 2,17-24] does not refer to a general attitude of wilful arrogance before God but rather to the Jews' confidence in a privileged status with God based on their possession of the Law"<sup>16</sup>. This means that "in Paul's mind the one who does the works of the law may call himself a true Jew; he can rely upon the Torah and boast of God and before God"<sup>17</sup>. If then in Rom 3:27 boasting is excluded, it is only because the Scriptures (cf. Rom 4:1-8) and the experience in Christ show that God justifies all men ἐκ πίστεως and not based on obedience to the Law.

As for the second substantive, νόμος, according to numerous commentators, is here not designating the Mosaic Law but is signifying 'principle', 'norm'<sup>18</sup>. Verse 27 is then translated thus: "Where is boasting then? It is excluded. Because of what principle/law? That of works? No, because of the principle/law of faith". It is thus an antanaclasis<sup>19</sup>: the word νόμος is no longer designating the Mosaic Law as in 3:19-20 and 21-22.

Having provided these two clarifications, let us move to the principles that the Apostle is drawing from the facts that he has presented in vv. 23-26 and from his anterior demonstration (Rom 1:18-3:20), principles that he invokes in order to support his position. The reader already knows them because they are only repeating the *propositio* of Rom 3:21-22a and can be summarized thus:

- a first principle of universality:  
justification is the same for all believers, Jews and non-Jews;
- a principle of exclusivity: by faith alone, in other words:  
without it being necessary to become a subject of the Law;
- a second principle of universality:  
it is thus because God is the God of all, Jews and non-Jews.

The first and second principles are inferred based on the argumentation of Rom 1:18-3:20 and from the experience of those who are in Christ. As to the third, it

<sup>16</sup> "Paul's Double Critique of Jewish Boasting. A Study of Rom 3,27 in Its Context", *Bib* 67 (1986) 520-531.

<sup>17</sup> THOMPSON, "Paul's Double Critique of Jewish Boasting", 522.

<sup>18</sup> LAMBRECHT, "Why is Boasting Excluded?", 368.

<sup>19</sup> Nevertheless, for some the vocable in v. 27 is still designating the Mosaic Law. Thus, for ex., H. HÜBNER, *Das Gesetz bei Paulus. Ein Beitrag zum Werden der paulinischen Theologie* (FRLANT 119; Göttingen 1982) 100ff.

<sup>20</sup> On this figure of speech, see chapter III, footnote 23.





could not have been formulated at the beginning of the letter because, by itself, it could not overcome the Jewish exception: by recognizing that YHWH is the God of all, the pious Jew indeed sees in the Law the way of salvation that God has offered him and desires to become just by the works that this Law invites him to do. But now that the Jewish exception has been overcome, it is possible to say that God is the God of all and justifies all believers by faith alone. This is what Paul is now going to have to demonstrate.

#### 4. The Proof from Authority. Rom 4 and the Justification of Abraham<sup>20</sup>

In a previous essay, Rom 4 was studied obliquely, regarding the connection between faith and Law<sup>21</sup>, in order to highlight the dimensions and components that Paul attributes to the act of believing; and as it makes an exegesis of Gen 15:6, I also examined the hermeneutical principles that guided Paul's reading in order to question its validity and pertinence<sup>22</sup>. But by itself, Rom 4 has not been treated for its progression and its function in the argumentation. As commentators are not yet in agreement on the meaning of this beautiful passage, it is important to return to it in order to weigh the stakes of the real debate: what does Paul mean by "justification by faith alone, without works"? Is it necessary, with the Lutheran reading, to see in it a justification that has nothing to do with morally good human behavior? Or is it necessary to interpret the Pauline affirmation socio-religiously: without works would signify without it being necessary to become Jewish and do what the Law requires for obtaining justice?

Let us recall that the argumentation of Rom 1–4 proceeds in a manner that is inverse to that of Gal 3, in which Paul began by saying that justification comes by faith, as for Abraham, and then that the Scriptures show the incapacity of the Law to justify, as the following diagram illustrates:

Galatians 3	Romans 1–4
<i>Positive</i> : Abraham's faith for justification justification for all believers, Jews and non-Jews (vv. 6–9)	<i>Negative</i> : no Jewish exception; the Law gives only knowledge of sin (Rom 1:18–3:20)
<i>Negative</i> : no justification by the Law (vv. 10–14)	<i>Positive</i> : Abraham's faith for justification (Rom 4)

<sup>20</sup> Several of the following paragraphs were largely inspired by ALETTI, *Israël et la Loi*.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. ALETTI, *God's Justice in Romans*, 114–122 [original: *Comment Dieu est-il juste?* Clefs pour interpréter l'épître aux Romains (Paris 1991) 98–105].

<sup>22</sup> ALETTI, *God's Justice in Romans*, 210–219.

would thus not be: is one justified by faith or by works? But is one a son of Abraham because one is a Jew or because one is a believer? As one can note, if Rom 4 is a scriptural proof, commentators are divided on what is the *propositio* that it is supposed to prove: Rom 3:21-22a, Rom 3:27 or even Rom 4:1? Is it thus necessary to read Rom 4 as a decisive scriptural proof (a) of justification by faith alone without works of the Mosaic Law, or rather (b) of the Abrahamic ancestry of all believers, Jews or not? As Rom 4 belongs to an argumentation and constitutes an argument from authority, it is absolutely necessary to find the *propositio* that engenders the developments. For exegetes do not agree on the affirmation(s) that Rom 4 stress or justify:

(a) Hays, Cranford, and those who share their opinion think that Rom 4 is directly linked to Rom 3:29 (“Or is God the God of Jews only? [Is he not the God of Gentiles also?] Yes, of Gentiles also”). If Paul is referring back to the case of Abraham, it is in order to show that since the beginning, God has wanted to be the God of all; Abraham was constituted “father of numerous nations” (Rom 4:17 that cites Gen 17:5) by God Himself, who also wanted to announce that one day the nations would themselves be a part of the descendants of Abraham, that they would become members of the people of the covenant.

(b) Most commentators connect Rom 4 to the thesis of Rom 3:21-22a and to various reprises that are made in v. 24, 26, 27, 28 and 30; in fact, the whole passage continually returns to justification by faith alone, without the works of the Mosaic Law, by emphasizing its gratuitousness: if God has granted it to us, this comes neither from our good works nor from our merits but from His sole decision and disposition. Abraham is then appealed to in order to show that these affirmations relating to justification by faith alone are not going against the teaching of the Scriptures but that they confirm them as prophesy.

Before reaching a decision of the function of Rom 4, let us examine more closely the arguments provided by others. In addition to the developments of Rom 4, the correct understanding of the first verse has been the subject of much discussion.

#### 4.1. *The Meaning of Rom 4:1*

The Greek text of this verse is far from clear: Τί οὖν ἐροῦμεν εὐρηκέναι Ἀβραάμ τὸν προπάτορα ἡμῶν κατὰ σάρκα; First of all, who is the “we” subject of the verb: Jews and they alone, or also the non-Jews? The response depends on the manner in which one connects the infinitive “to have found” to the rest of the sentence: is it Abraham who has found, and in this case, what did he find? Or even, is it we who have found: “what shall we say to have found in Abraham, that he is our an-

cestor according to the flesh”? A simple listing of some translations will show how one can resolve the ambiguities:

(a) “What then shall we say about Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh?”<sup>27</sup> This translation follows the codex *Vaticanus*, which omits the perfect infinitive “to have found” (εὕρηκέναι), and one might rightly ask if this reading does not dispose of the difficulties a little too quickly. Whatever the case, the sentence remains vague: if it is clear that Paul is going to speak of Abraham, one cannot know for what reason, and so the remainder of the argumentation would be deprived of any purpose. For one could “say” many things about Abraham, and it is quite improbable that before initiating his scriptural proof, Paul would not have clearly indicated to his reader the reasons for which he is referring to the Patriarch.

(b) “What then shall we say about Abraham, our forefather? What did he gain according to the flesh?”<sup>28</sup> The “according to the flesh” (κατὰ σάρκα) is here connected to the infinitive “to have found (or obtained)”. This translation can be recommended from some Church Fathers and ancient manuscripts. But one has the impression that for them the change made in the word order gives meaning to a phrase that seemed to have none. But if one is to respect the order provided by the great majority of ancient witnesses, it is necessary to take into account the distance that exists between “having obtained” and “according to the flesh”. And what does “to obtain according to the flesh” mean: “to obtain a new human level”? Thus, Abraham would have received a son, a descendant. But the following verse goes in a totally different direction: what the Patriarch obtained is justification, which is clearly not according to the flesh. Would then the “according to the flesh” be the equivalent of “based on works” (cf. v. 2): “what has he received thanks to his works?” Nothing, because everything has been given to him by faith. If this interpretation is possible, it is not probable for semantic and rhetorical reasons: even assuming that the phrases κατὰ σάρκα (v. 1) and ἐξ ἔργων (v. 2) are equivalents, why does the rest of the chapter not parallel ἐκ πίστεως and κατὰ πνεῦμα (that would be opposed to κατὰ σάρκα in v. 1)? In fact, to what end would Paul have utilized κατὰ σάρκα as an equivalent of ἐξ ἔργων in v. 1, if only to ignore it later? Thus, it is necessary to leave the words ‘Abraham our forefather according to the flesh’ together.

(c) “What then are we to say was gained by Abraham, our ancestor according to the flesh?”<sup>29</sup> This question clearly introduces what the remainder of the chapter

<sup>27</sup> RSV, JB, CEI.

<sup>28</sup> TOB.

<sup>29</sup> The NRSV and the majority of translations. For a defense of this interpretation, see D.J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans* (NICNT; Grand Rapids, MI 1996) 257-260.

is going to answer: by faith, Abraham received justification and became the father of a multitude of nations. Several commentators even think that the verb εὐρηκέναι in Rom 4:1 refers to the patriarchal history in which “to find grace” (εὐρίσκειν χάριν) in the eyes of the Lord is essential<sup>30</sup>. The entire chapter shows that the object obtained by Abraham is the expression par excellence of divine grace: justification, and with it, descendants who are not “according to the flesh” since it is indeed solely from the word of God. But Paul would have been able to express this by saying only: “What shall we say that Abraham found?” without the phrase “our ancestor<sup>31</sup> according to the flesh”. If the term ‘ancestor’ (προπάτωρ) connotes a physical ancestry, the phrase “ancestor according to the flesh” is then tautological, or at the least redundant. But this is not always the case as 3Mac 2:21 shows, in which God is called “προπάτωρ, holy among holies”, without any kind of physical procreation being envisaged. However, Rom 4:1 is, until proven otherwise, the only passage in which “according to the flesh” accompanies the title “ancestor”<sup>32</sup> because physical ancestry is, except for the one exception, connoted by the texts. If Paul thus adds “according to the flesh”, it is so that his reader correctly interprets, that is to say non-metaphorically, the vocable ‘ancestor’: the ethnic aspect is clearly marked. But the “we” could then be designating only the Jews and them alone. We will return to this.

(d) Let us get to Hays’ interpretation, known for its success and the discussion to which it has given rise for quite some time. This author adopts an original division of Rom 4:1: “What shall we say then? Have we found Abraham to be our forefather according to the flesh?”<sup>33</sup>. The conclusion would then be that Abraham cannot be the ancestor of non-Jews (because the stated condition is ethnic)<sup>34</sup>, but

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Gen 6:8; 18:3; 19:19; 30:27; 32:5; 33:8; 34:11.

<sup>31</sup> Most of the witnesses read ‘ancestor’ and some ‘father’.

<sup>32</sup> For a formulation close to that of Rom 4:1 see JOSEPHUS, *Bellum Judaicum*, V, 380. In it Josephus relates the incident related in Gen 12, in which Pharaoh is said to have taken the princess Sarah “the mother of our race”, and adds: “What then became of Abraham our ancestor (προπάτωρ ἡμέτερος)?”

<sup>33</sup> R. HAYS, “Have We Found Abraham to Be Our Forefather According to the Flesh? A Reconsideration of Rom 4:1”, *NovT* 27 (1985) 75-98.

<sup>34</sup> If the “we” in Rom 4:1 is designating Jews and Gentiles at the same time, the verse takes on a completely different meaning: “What will we say to have found, we the baptized from Jewish and pagan origins, that Abraham is the ancestor of us all according to the flesh — or, in other words, that we are from the physical family of Abraham?” The answer will be negative because such a conclusion is clearly false. This reading is proposed by N.T. WRIGHT, “Romans and the theology of Paul”, *Pauline Theology. Romans* (ed. D.M. HAY – E.E. JOHNSON) (Minneapolis, MN 1995) III, 30-67. I consider it to be close to that of Hays and Cranford, and the critical examination can be applied to all three at the same time, even if, in the opinion of Cranford, Wright has not understood the project of Paul in Rom 4: cf. CRANFORD, “Abraham in Romans 4”, 75 n.



if he is the ancestor of Jews for reasons that are not just ethnic then he can (for the same reasons) also be the ancestor of some Gentiles. This would be the point that Paul is proposing to prove in Rom 4<sup>35</sup>. In order to defend his division of the verse, Hays notes that each time the relatively frequent question in Romans<sup>36</sup> “What can we say (then)?” appears, it forms an independent sentence<sup>37</sup>, the function of which is to introduce a false conclusion to which Paul responds negatively — “Certainly not!”<sup>38</sup>. Why then would it not be the same in Rom 4:1? Hays’ suggestion cannot be accepted for the following reasons:

(i) Certainly Rom 4 begins with the question “What then can we say?” But the other occurrences of the formula leave no doubt whatsoever on the status of the independent proposition, to the extent that what follows each time clearly is indicating that a new sentence is beginning, thanks to a conjunction, the mood of the verb, the case of the substantive (that is then in the nominative), or even thanks to the interjection “Certainly not!”<sup>39</sup>:

3:5 What shall we say? That God is unjust?

6:1 What shall we say then? Are we to continue to sin?

7:7 What then shall we say? That the Law is sin?

8:31 What then shall we say to this? If God is for us [...]?

9:14 What shall we say then? Is there injustice on God’s part?

9:30 What shall we say then? That Gentiles have attained [righteousness]?

Thus, Rom 4:1 would be lacking all the elements that, in the other occurrences, dispel the ambiguity. And it would be the only time in which the question is followed by an infinitive with accusatives, resulting in a totally equivocal sentence that is separated from the question. Because the Greek reader, who understands the infinitive in the order in which it appears, will not first choose an implicit “we” as the subject of “to have found” (εὕρηκεναι) but rather Abraham: “(what) has Abraham our ancestor according to the flesh obtained?” or in more elegant terms “What has Abraham obtained, our ancestor according to the flesh?”. The

<sup>35</sup> An interpretation of Hays’ position by CRANFORD, “Abraham in Romans 4”, 75.

<sup>36</sup> In addition to Rom 4, see Rom 3:5; 6:1; 7:7; 8:31; 9:14, 30.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. D. HELLMHOLM, “Enthymemic Argumentation in Paul. The Case of Romans 6”, *Paul in his Hellenistic Context* (ed. T. ENGBERG-PEDERSEN) (Minneapolis, MN 1995) 124. These sentences, of the pleonastic type, reinforce the author/reader relationship. In the Pauline argumentations, they are relatively frequent (for ex., “What is it necessary to conclude?” “You will undoubtedly object that [...]”).

<sup>38</sup> These interjections very often introduce a counter-argumentation. Cf. D. HELLMHOLM, “Enthymemic Argumentation in Paul”, 125.

<sup>39</sup> The latter is present in Rom 3:6; 6:2, 15; 7:7; 9:14. Trans. RSV.

a larger connotation: “Have we found that Abraham is our *father* according to the flesh?” because the Jews saw (and continue to see) in him the father of *believers*, of the people of *God*. Thus they could have responded negatively. (“No, Abraham is not only that”) or with nuances (“Yes, but he is also our father in faith”). Moreover, it is because the vocable ‘father’ has a larger connotation that the Gentiles can also recognize in Abraham their *father*. In short, even if one follows Hays’ division and translation (in which the “we” would be designating the Jews), the choice of the term ‘ancestor’ requires a positive response. In no way does Rom 4 have the function of showing that the patriarch is “also the *ancestor* of some Gentiles”<sup>42</sup>, but that he is the “father” of those who believe, which connotes another dimension. Whatever might be said, if in Rom 4:1 Abraham is really the *ancestor* of Jews, the rest of the chapter seems to suggest that he is the *father* of *only* believers, Jews and/or Gentiles (cf. v. 12)<sup>43</sup>.

Another semantic problem is that of the status of the Gentiles. Still according to Hays and Cranford, Rom 4 would be aiming to show that the Gentiles are themselves also *included in the people of God*<sup>44</sup>. But this formulation, and the reading that it assumes, cannot be applied to either Rom 3:29-30 or Rom 4 because if God is truly the God of Israel and *the Nations*, one must highlight the absence of the expression “people of God” in this passage; the Nations remain what they are and can receive the Gospel without having to change culture or status. It is the same in Rom 4:14, in which Paul cites Gen 17:5: “I have made you the father of a multitude of nations”. Clearly, in Rom 4, the Apostle prefers the language of the family to that of the people in order to speak of the vocation of the Gentiles: they have become descendants of Abraham (Rom 4:17, 18), his children, and those of God, heirs. One will undoubtedly object that later, in Rom 9:25, he cites Hos 2:23 in order to describe what the pagans have become: “Those who are not my people I will call my people”, clearly signifying that for him the Gentiles are themselves also included or admitted to form the people of God, whose boundaries are not limited to those of ethnic Israel (κατὰ σάρκα). I have already explained this reading at length else-

<sup>42</sup> CRANFORD, “Abraham in Romans”, 75, which repeats Hays word for word.

<sup>43</sup> Paul is not speaking in exclusive terms; he does not declare: so that Abraham our ancestor also becomes our father, we, the Jews, must believe. The problem comes, however, from the object of to believe — because Jews faithful to the Torah are believers. But is the Apostle here limiting the appellation “believers” to those who believe in Jesus Christ? The formulation suggests it, but the object of to believe not being Christological in Rom 4, it is difficult to draw firm conclusions — unlike Gal 3.

<sup>44</sup> According to CRANFORD, “Abraham in Romans 4”, 88, Paul takes the figure of Abraham throughout Rom 4 in order to show that God always had the intention of causing the Gentiles to enter into His people (Rom 3:29-30).

## 5. Faith and Works: What Opposition?

Cranford emphasizes, as one is going to see, the fact that Rom 4 does not speak of the efforts that Abraham would have had to provide in order to be justified: according to him, the chapter does not oppose a justice granted by virtue of a total adherence of faith in the divine word and a justice granted based on meritorious good works but rather a justice graciously given, because it is not based on a prior agreement, and a justice granted by virtue of the stipulations of a covenant (“If you attach yourself to my Torah, then I will declare you just and you will be blessed”), in other words, a justice (or justification) to which God would have been obliged by virtue of His previous commitments and established in the Law. Thus, every idea of effort being excluded from the landscape of Rom 4, Cranford quite naturally concludes that the Apostle is in no way looking to highlight Abraham’s behavior, his response of faith in the divine word; nowhere in these verses can believers find a call to imitate the example of Abraham’s faith<sup>50</sup>.

Undoubtedly, Cranford is right not to emphasize Abraham’s response of faith but the fact that justification had been granted to him outside the system of the Law because he was uncircumcised (v. 10) and, because of this, had the same status as the impious (v. 5). It is necessary, however, to recognize that the formulation of vv. 2-8 is amphibological: it suffices to delete these verses (except for the citation of Gen 15:6 in v. 3) so that the point maintained by Cranford clearly stands out because Paul certainly wants to highlight the circumstances in which Abraham was justified. But then, what is the purpose of v. 2 and vv. 4-8, which Cranford himself recognizes have been misunderstood by the majority of interpreters since the usual reading — especially Lutheran — thinks that its validity is found in them. Making a detour to study the arrangement will help us to perceive the meaning and the function of these verses.

### 5.1. *The Characters and the Themes*

Like numerous Pauline argumentative units, Rom 4 obeys several principles of complementary arrangement. If, in the first instance, one takes into consideration the distribution of the vocabulary, actors, and spatial-temporal categories, the chapter clearly appears to be divided into two parts<sup>51</sup>:

(a) vv. 2-12, in which Abraham is the principle actor: the one whose faith is counted as justice, the one whose sins have been remitted, and therefore blessed,

<sup>50</sup> Cranford’s observation, “Abraham in Romans 4”, 87.

<sup>51</sup> Verse 1 serves as an introduction and obliquely points out the two decisive points: (i) Abraham found justice with God by faith without the Law (ii) and he received descendants who include both Jews as well as non-Jews.

the one who received circumcision, and who is the father of all believers, circumcised or not. Of course, God is explicitly named in vv. 2, 3, 5, 6, but He only actively intervenes in vv. 6 and 8<sup>52</sup>; and if it is also a question of believers, Jews and non-Jews, in vv. 11-12, their role is entirely subordinate to that of the Patriarch: they are mentioned only because Abraham is their father (only later will it be a question of their status as descendants and heirs); clearly the text is emphasizing what is (or was) “reckoned”<sup>53</sup>, what thus happened to the Patriarch, in a clear progression that goes from “our ancestor” in v. 1 to “our father” in v. 12.

The distribution of characters and the vocabulary allow subdividing these verses into two parts:

– in vv. 2-8, the relationship between God and Abraham is the only one described: corresponding to faith on Abraham’s part is the justice granted by God, with a clear emphasis on graciousness; it is not for a work (of the Law<sup>54</sup>), and thus by obligation, that the Patriarch has been justified but by grace, without any obligation on God’s part:

- v. 2 “for if Abraham was justified by works (ἐξ ἔργων)”
- v. 4 “the one who works (τῷ ἐργαζομένῳ) [...]”
- v. 5 “to one who does not work (τῷ μὴ ἐργαζομένῳ) [...]”
- v. 6 “apart from works (χωρὶς ἔργων)”<sup>55</sup>

– vv. 9-12 emphasize the circumstances of the relationship described in vv. 2-8. *When* was Abraham justified? While he was still uncircumcised or after he had been circumcised? The repetition of the words “circumcision” and “uncircumcision” dominates these verses<sup>56</sup>:

<sup>52</sup> One must not forget the theological passives that allow not explicitly naming God in vv. 3-12: “it was reckoned” (vv. 3, 9, 10, 11); “are not reckoned” (v. 4), “(his faith) was reckoned” (v. 5); “(whose iniquities) have been forgiven” (v. 7); “(whose sins) have been covered” (v. 7).

<sup>53</sup> In Greek, λογίζομαι; see vv. 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11. The term runs throughout this first part and only reappears at the end, in vv. 22, 23, and 24 for reasons linked to another (midrashic) model of arrangement. Several commentators correctly raise the contrast between the next to last line of 4QMMT — let us add, in other deuterocanonical Jewish texts but also absent from the Canon — and Rom 4:3 (Gal 3:6). Cf., among others, DUNN, “4QMMT and Galatians”, 151-152.

<sup>54</sup> The word ‘Law’ does not appear in these verses, but it is clearly understood since Rom 3:28 just spoke of it (justification “without the works of the Law”, which means: without the works required by the Law, as has already been pointed out).

<sup>55</sup> One will have noted that here Paul is again reasoning by using the *reversio* (*a* = works; *b* = working; *b'* = not working; *a'* = without works).

<sup>56</sup> In these verses, Paul uniformly uses the substantives “circumcision” and “uncircumcision”; here, they have been replaced by adjectives in order to facilitate understanding.

- v. 9 “Is this blessing pronounced only upon the circumcised, or also upon the uncircumcised?”.
- v. 10a “How then was it reckoned to him? Was it before or after he had been circumcised?”.
- v. 10b “It was not after, but before he was circumcised”.
- v. 11a “He received circumcision as a sign or seal of the righteousness which he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised”.
- v. 11b “The purpose was to make him the father of all who believe without being circumcised [...]”.
- v. 12 “and likewise father of the circumcised who are not merely circumcised but also follow the example of the faith which our father Abraham had before he was circumcised”.

Beginning in v. 9, the orientation and the stakes of vv. 9-12 are clearly indicated: beyond the case of Abraham, it is a question of knowing if justice and the blessing to which it is tied extend only to the circumcised. Because for Paul, the fact that even Abraham had been justified while he was uncircumcised, solely for having believed in the divine word, has a normative value: this means that all those who believe, even if they are uncircumcised, are justified like he.

In v. 11 the mention of circumcision as a sign and a seal of this justice by faith is important. But an objection could be raised: certainly, Abraham was justified because he believed, but his situation remains unique, to the extent that, after his own circumcision (required and executed in Gen 17:10-14), the situation has been radically changed for him and for his descendants: in order to be in the covenant and to benefit from the divine blessings, from now on, it is necessary to be circumcised<sup>57</sup>; how is Paul going to demonstrate that circumcision — and the Mosaic system that introduced it — has not modified the economy of justification by faith alone?

(b) Verses 13-25 constitute the second part of the scriptural proof. For, as one will see, if Paul considered Abraham's status as uncircumcised as having a normative value for the uncircumcised's access to justification, how can faith, and it alone, make of those who are uncircumcised sons of Abraham? Verses 13-18 are going in part to respond to this question. One will note the repetition of the words “promise” and “to promise”<sup>58</sup>: if in vv. 2-12 it is the relationship between faith and justice that dominates, without one knowing *in what* Abraham *has believed*, the text now moves towards the object of the believing; for the divine word could have taken diverse forms: that of an injunction (“I demand of you to believe that I am the only true God”), an announcement concerning outsiders (“I will destroy

<sup>57</sup> Gen 17:9-14.

<sup>58</sup> Respectively, ἐπαγγελία (vv. 13, 14, 16, 20) and ἐπαγγέλλομαι (v. 21).

- “to reckon” (λογίζομαι) vv. 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 22, 23, 24 (a total of 10 times)
- “justice” (δικαιοσύνη) vv. 6, 9, 11 [2x], 13, 22 (a total of six times)
- “to believe” (πιστεύω) vv. 5, 11, 17, 18, 24 (five times)
- “faith” (πίστις) vv. 5, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14, 16 [2x], 19, 20 (ten times)
- “incredulity” (ἀπιστία) v. 20
- “Abraham” vv. 9, 12, 13, 16
- the final citation (v. 22), that is, as is frequently the case, a reprise of the main citation because the beginning and the end of a midrash correspond to each other
- the conclusion, which is in the form of a *hatima*<sup>60</sup>.

This framework is indicative of the genre but still remains too limited because it only allows verifying if a passage, sprinkled with biblical citations, is or is not midrashic. The real problem is setting forth what Paul intends to demonstrate, and how he does it with the help of which rules.

For one of the rules utilized by the rabbis of the time in order to explain biblical texts by each other, the interpretation or function of which remains a subject of discussion, is clearly found in the first unit (vv. 2-8). It is the *gezerah shawah*, an analogy established between two biblical passages based on the words they have in common<sup>61</sup>. Here, thanks to the presence of the verb “to reckon” (λογίζομαι) in Gen 15:6 and in Psa 31/32:1-2, the Apostle is able to interpret the two citations by each other. Let us see why Paul has picked these texts and how he proceeds<sup>62</sup>.

It is easy enough to justify the presence of Gen 15:6 in Rom 4, to the extent that searching in the Scripture for passages that confirm his thesis of justification by faith (Rom 3:21-22, 28, 30), the Apostle can find in Gen 15:6 the ideal text. Indeed, (i) it is a part of the five books of the Law and thus has an uncontested authority; (ii) it is also the first verse of the Bible in which the words ‘faith’ and ‘justice’ are related and in which justice is credited by God based on faith<sup>63</sup>. (iii) What is more, and has already been seen, justice is granted before and independent of circumcision and the system of the Mosaic Law.

<sup>60</sup> The usual conclusion of homiletic midrashim (see, for ex., Rom 9:29), which does not have for its goal repeating or summarizing the argumentation but of consoling the hearer or the reader (with an often eschatological connotation).

<sup>61</sup> The New Testament has several examples of the *gezerah shawah*. See, for ex., Luke 10:27; Heb 7:1-3; Gal 3:10-13; Gal 3:12 Rom 9:25-28; Jas 2:21-24.

<sup>62</sup> I have already studied the *gezerah shawah* in Rom 4 in ALETTI, *New Approaches*, 38-60. Also see the monographs of P. BASTA, *Gezerah Shawah*, and ID., *Abramo in Romani 4. L'analisi dell'agire divino nella ricerca esegetica di Paolo* (AnBib 168; Roma 2007).

<sup>63</sup> It is, moreover, the first time each of the roots (faith, believe; just, justice) appears in the Hebrew and Greek Bible. It is thus a question of an absolute beginning.



But, in spite of everything, Gen 15:6 remains enigmatic. In what way can faith be reckoned as justice? And how to understand faith? For it is good works and respect for the law that permit declaring someone just; actually, for a Jew, faith is only faith if it is operative and revealed by acts<sup>64</sup>. When Gen 15:6 says: “And he believed in the Lord; and he reckoned it to him as righteousness”, is it thus not necessary to understand that, far from being an isolated occurrence, the faith of the Patriarch was a long walk of trust, of fidelity and of obedience to God, who appreciated this attitude and reckoned it as *justice*?<sup>65</sup> It is for this reason that Cranford rejects seeing in these verses an opposition between faith and works: what would an inoperative faith be except a dead faith?

If it is true that the circumstances of the events referred to in Gen 15:6 are important, to the extent that they demonstrate that justice is granted by God even to the believer *who is not a Jew* — what is the object of Paul’s statements in vv. 9-12 —, is it very certain that the faith/works opposition of vv. 2-8 already had this connotation? The second text that Paul parallels with Gen 15:6 allows responding to the question:

<i>Psa 31/32:1-2 = Rom 4:7-8</i>	<i>Gen 15:6 = Rom 4:3</i>
God does not reckon the sin of the man ⇔ blessed, justified	God has reckoned the faith of Abraham ⇔ justified

The men of whom Psa 31/32:1-2 is speaking have committed sins, some of which even qualified as iniquities; in order that his reader has no doubt about this, Paul repeats it three times, clearly without forgetting to indicate, in this regard, the divine forgiveness:

<b>sinful man</b>	<b>God’s forgiveness</b>
those whose iniquities	have been forgiven
those whose sins	have been covered <sup>66</sup>
the man whose sin	will not be reckoned

<sup>64</sup> See, besides the numerous Jewish texts mentioned by the commentaries, 4QMMT already mentioned above.

<sup>65</sup> An example of this exegesis of Gen 15:6 is in James 2:21-24; and James is very representative of the interpretation that intertestamental Judaism makes of this passage (above all based on Gen 22). Cf. 1Mac 2:52; Sir 44:19-21; GenR 55-56; Abbot 5:3; MekEx 14:15 and 14:31; JOSEPHUS, *Antiquitates*, I, 233-234.

<sup>66</sup> This is the meaning of the passive ἐπεκαλύφθησαν (= “have been covered”): the operation does not consist in covering over the sins that would still exist and that one would hide but in making them disappear by destroying them, as the parallel with “have been forgiven” shows.

If there is something that one cannot do for oneself but that can only be received from another, it is forgiveness. Whoever gravely sins cannot boast of his good works before God; he must only wait and implore His mercy. The interest of these verses of Psa 31/32 comes from what they have attributed to David himself, who was under the regime of the Mosaic Law: the blessing of the subject of the Law is to see his iniquities forgiven. But, will one object, the subject of the Law is forgiven only to the extent that he is sincere in his repentance and in performing the works that this same Law proposes to this end: fasting, mortification, celebration of the days of expiation, etc., these are the channels through which the forgiveness promised by God passes. Thus, how can this text shed light on that of Gen 15:6, in which the Patriarch has not committed any sin, and what is more, is still not under the regime of the Law (by being circumcised)? Verses 9-10 give the answer: Abraham, uncircumcised (v. 10b), and thus a sinner, impious (ἄσεβής, v. 5), needed only his faith in order to be declared just by God. Thus, it is shown that from the very beginning justice is connected to faith alone, and not to the works required by the Law.

But the faith/works opposition is not limited to this aspect. The fact that Gen 15:6 and Psa 31/32:1-2 are, by the *gezerah shawah*, recognized analogous at the level of the initial situations (to be a sinner/ to commit sins) and the changes effected by God clearly indicates that, for Paul, justice is granted to humans who can neither claim the status of just nor benefit from their good works: good moral behavior is not what has prompted God to justify. By comparing and connecting the two texts, Paul is bringing to light the fundamentally gratuitous aspect of the divine initiative that justifies. What is granted to humans in Gen 15:6 and in Psa 31/31:1-2 thus becomes emblematic of all justification, for the non-Jew *and* for the Jew: even for the latter, who has the procedures of expiation provided for by the Law, justice is graciously granted and is not an obligation; the procedures of expiation do not remove from justification its gratuitousness. What is more, David's proclamation (Psa 31/32) has all the components of an act of *faith*: to say that the man whose sins God forgives is blessed is to testify to the experience of salvation, to proclaim that one desires it and one awaits it, which was Abraham's attitude. Faith truly consists in totally submitting to the word and mercy of God. The opposition between faith and works is not applied to two situations only, one without the Law (for the non-Jew) and one under the Law (for the Jew), it touches those, Jews *and* non-Jews, who because of their sins or their status as sinners, cannot benefit from their (good) works. It is thus necessary to move beyond an interpretation that rests on only one of the aspects; in other words, one must combine the Lutheran reading and that of Cranford, presented above. But why, through the *gezerah shawah*, put Abraham in the situation of the sinner incapable of benefitting from his works? Responding to

this question is the equivalent of determining the function of Rom 4 in the entirety of the argumentation, and this is now what it is necessary for us to treat.

## 6. Rom 4 and Its Function

### 6.1. *Why Must Paul Appeal to Gen 15:6?*

In order to understand the function of Rom 4 better, let us recall the difficulties that the Apostle had to confront so as to perceive the audaciousness of his commentary.

(i) The biblical tradition indeed had already emphasized the connection between the observance of the Law and blessing: the end of the book of Deuteronomy, with the series of curses and blessings is not the only witness to this strong link; it suffices to glance through the Psalms in which happiness is promised to all those who delight in the Law of the Lord<sup>67</sup>. Not that all these passages ignore sin and the impossibility of benefiting from good works, a situation in which many subjects of the Law (if not all) find themselves; but one is dealing with a shared conviction: for the Jew, outside (of the system) of the Law, there is no salvation. To want, like and following Paul, to find in the Scriptures, and what is more, in the books of the Law, the witness of a divine justice granted without the Law, is, as one will admit, the challenge — or the provocation, as our fellow Jews will say.

(ii) The context of Gen 15:6 also seems to go against the Apostle's interpretation, to the extent that this chapter's first verse begins precisely with the word *μισθός* ("wage" "salary"<sup>68</sup>) while, according to Paul himself, in the Patriarch's case, it could not be a question of a salary (Rom 4:4):

Some time later, the word of Yahweh came to Abram in a vision: "Do not be afraid, Abram! I am your shield and shall give you a very great reward (*μισθός*)" (Gen 15:1 NJB).

The Patriarch's situation allows understanding the term *μισθός*: after his victory over those who had captured his nephew Lot (Gen 14), God came to announce to him that He would protect him (by being his shield); to indicate that this protection will be efficacious and constant, that it will thus make him strong, He continues with another military image: "your *μισθός*, your wage (as a soldier) will greatly increase"; the following narrative (vv. 4-5) is going to clarify the meaning of this image: here, the soldier's wage, the conqueror's salary, is the foundation of his dynasty's expansion. The text is clearly stating a paradox: it is God who protects and who, without requiring to be paid in return, is proposing, on the contrary, wages for the one He has decided to protect! Paul has truly grasped this paradox, which

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<sup>67</sup> Cf., for ex., Psa 1; 93/94:12-14; 105/106:3; 111/112:1-2; 118/119:1; 127/128:1.

<sup>68</sup> What one gives in exchange for an effected work; or even 'reward'.

highlights the divine liberality. One will undoubtedly retort that by hearing the divine voice promise a salary, the inattentive reader cannot but see in Abraham a soldier *that henceforth God is going to have to pay*. Such a misunderstanding can in no way undermine Paul's exegesis, valid and faithful to the text's logic: the μισθός of v. 1 is the object of the promise, the descendants of Abraham, descendants that he no longer awaits, that he cannot give to himself but can only receive from God by trusting in Him (Rom 4:19-21). If the Patriarch was waiting for nothing, God was no more obliged; the promise had no other reason than His own will or liberality.

(iii) Paul also had to declare himself against the interpretations of Gen 15:6 by the anterior Jewish traditions because one can note a growing tendency to read this passage from Genesis in light of Gen 22:17-18, undoubtedly with the help of a *gezerah shawah*<sup>69</sup>, as the following representative texts show<sup>70</sup>:

<sup>20</sup> [Abraham] kept the law of the Most High, and was taken into covenant with him; he established the covenant in his flesh, and when he was tested he was found faithful. <sup>21</sup> Therefore the Lord assured him by an oath that the nations would be blessed through his posterity; that he would multiply him like the dust of the earth, and exalt his posterity like the stars, and cause them to inherit from sea to sea and from the River to the ends of the earth. (Sir 44:20-21)

Was not Abraham found faithful when tested, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness? (1Mac 2:52)

In reading these texts, one understands that Paul wanted to propose a totally different interpretation of Gen 15:6 and make it the anchor of his thought on justification because the stakes were important for the future of the Churches: in addition to the question of the circumcision of ethnic Christians, was this one, even more radical, of the salvific function of the Law. His exegesis had to be solid and not have the weakness of that of Gal 3:9, 10-14. We will return to this point.

## 6.2. *Questions on the Pauline Conception of Justification*

It is now possible to confront other questions: (i) does the Greek verb λογίζομαι (to reckon), repeated several times in Rom 4, as was shown above, signify that for Abraham and the sinner “against whom the Lord will not reckon sin” (v. 8) justification was only a declaration — purely forensic — without a real transformation?

<sup>69</sup> Indeed, the two passages have three words in common: ‘your seed’ (σπέρμα), the stars (ἀστέρες) and heaven (οὐρανός).

<sup>70</sup> See also Jubilees 18:15-17; 19:9; 23:10; 24:11 in which is maintained above all the Patriarch's fidelity, the perfection of his actions and his obedience to the Law; CD 3:2-3; etc. In the NT, Jas 2:23.

(ii) If in Rom 4:11 Paul alludes to the oracle of Gen 17:10-14 on circumcision<sup>71</sup>, why does he not explicitly cite this text that constitutes the principle objection to his interpretation of justification? (iii) In Rom 4 justification is directly effected by God, without Christ; how to interpret this absence? If God has justified all those who, like Abraham, have believed in His word, and before the coming of Jesus Christ, then how can one say that justification came only after the coming of the Son of God?

As these questions directly affect the nature of justification as Paul conceived of it, it is important to provide them with responses that will highlight the Apostle's thought.

(i) Is the Greek verb λογίζομαι (to reckon) only declarative and, as a consequence, would Abraham's justification also be? In other words, would the Patriarch have been declared just without his truly being so? would his state as a sinner have remained, but God would have ignored his sin, and it would thus no longer be the case? This conclusion would be possible if there were not the parallel between Abraham and David. This is a clear indication that God does not only close His eyes to faults. Indeed, for there to be a *gezerah shawah*, it sufficed for Paul to utilize only v. 2 of Ps 31/32, the one in which the verb λογίζομαι is found that allows bringing it together with Gen 15:6: "Blessed is the man against whom the Lord will not reckon his sin" (RSV). But by adding v. 1 of the Psalm and thus by proceeding by accumulation, the Apostle wants to show that God does not only close His eyes but that He also forgives sins, even the most serious:

μακάριοι	ὧν	ἀφέθησαν	αἱ ἀνομίαι
καὶ	ὧν	ἐπεκαλύφθησαν	αἱ ἁμαρτίαι
μακάριος ἄνθρωπος	οὗ	οὐ μὴ λογίσῃται κύριος	ἁμαρτίαν

The parallel is clearly cumulative and synonymic: for Paul, as for the Psalmist, to forgive, to cover, and not to reckon are equivalents. By adding v. 1 from Ps 31/32, Paul clearly means to demonstrate that justification is not solely a declaration but that it is a liberation from sin.

(ii) Why does the Apostle not explicitly cite the divine oracle in Gen 17:10-14, which apparently is a decisive objection to his doctrine of justification? I have already responded to this question<sup>72</sup>, but without a doubt it is good to return to it briefly. Of course, the injunctions of Gen 17:10-14 are not mentioned in Rom 4, and one could believe that Paul has not dared to confront the question. Nevertheless, the *gezerah shawah* provides an indirect but decisive response. For if the

<sup>71</sup> However, he cites Gen 17:5 in Rom 4:17.

<sup>72</sup> Cf. ALETTI, "Romans 4 and Genesis 17", 37-60.

subject of the Law who has fallen into sin finds himself in a situation identical to that of the uncircumcised and must rely solely on the divine mercy in order to find justice, it is because one cannot obtain forgiveness by being circumcised and becoming a subject of the Law. Gen 15:6 thus remains the model of the experience offered to the ethnic Christians. And if the injunctions of Gen 17:10-14 are not essential in order to obtain justification and the blessings that flow from it, one understands that Paul has proposed his own interpretation of circumcision that he is declaring to have been instituted “as a seal of the righteousness that he [= Abraham] had by faith” while uncircumcised (Rom 4:11).

(iii) The role of Christ in the work of divine justification. Rom 4 ends with a Christological affirmation: “Jesus our Lord, who was put to death for our trespasses and raised for our justification”. But at no time during the course of his exegesis of Gen 15:6 has Paul said that justice had been granted to Abraham *because of his faith in Jesus Christ*. Truly, nothing more can be said of us, his descendants who believe in Christ, because, like Abraham, we believe in the One who gives life, God, who could not give a better demonstration of His victory over death — but also over sterility and *necrosis* — than by resurrecting Jesus our Lord. Thus, Abraham and we believe *in the same God*, who has fully fulfilled his promise (to give sons/daughters) by giving (glorious) life to his own Son, who died for our sins.

But if the Lord died and was resurrected for “our justification”, it was also for Abraham’s. Thus, the Patriarch himself was not able to be granted justice without the Christic mediation, and he had in advance to benefit from the justification obtained in or by Jesus Christ alone. According to some commentators, who in this regard mention John 8:56, the faith of Abraham in Rom 4 would already be a faith in Jesus Christ. Paul certainly does not deny that the mediation of Christ reaches all humanity and thus Abraham — v. 25 really has a universal impact, its connotation being *inclusive*. But the mention of the instrument of universal justification is not necessary to the proof provided by Gen 15:6 because in Rom 4 Paul is not questioning the mediation of Christ and its impact, but rather he wants to show that from the beginning justification came by means of faith — before circumcision and thus the Law — and that this constituted the norm of all future justification.

Then, why at the end does the Apostle mention that Christ was delivered for our sins and resurrected for our justification? Let us not forget that these verses are a *hatima*, the function of which is not to summarize the argumentation but to give hope, which is what contact with the text of Gen 15:6 does by making known the desire for justification and for life that God has for humanity. Even if the *hatima* does not have all the components of a *peroratio*, it is not simply an ornamental addition, but it explains an essential link between the situation described by the Scriptures and our own, between the beginning and the end.



### 6.3. *Faith and Justification - The Radicality of Their Relationship*

If Rom 4 parallels Gen 15:6 and Psa 31/32:1-21, in other words if it places Abraham in the category of sinners, it is because, as we have seen, the major problem confronted since the beginning of the letter is that of the Jewish exception. And Rom 3:21–4:25 is concerned with the Mosaic Law as a system that allows the whitewashing of faults and sins.

But Abraham's negative situation, his state as a sinner or one who is impious, has another function, typical, that of giving faith all its radicality. Not that Paul wants to debase the creature, to highlight his state of dilapidation and his sin, his incapacity to do good, in order to exalt as a counterpoint the divine mercy that comes to his rescue. What the Patriarch's situation here highlights is the gratuitousness of the connection that is instituted on both sides: Abraham, who demands nothing but totally welcomes the word of the One who reaches out to him, and God, who wants life and gives it graciously, generously. If to believe consists in totally relying upon the divine word, to entrust our future life to this same word, then the case<sup>73</sup> of Abraham is exemplary because the Patriarch has received everything from the word in which he has believed, the word that effected what it announced: his identify of father and ours, that of children, *engendered by faith*. And our own faith constitutes a fulfillment of the promise (that was made to him): the adherence of the Nations to the proclamation of the Gospel makes Abraham the father of all believers since the faith of each generation fulfills the promise and in some way gives new children to the Patriarch, at the same time it shows the fecundity of faith. The act of believing causes us to enter into a family, gives us an identity, that of sons and daughters. For us, to believe is the equivalent of a procreation. And we are incapable of giving ourselves our own origin, we can only receive it. Promise, faith and justification are thus closely united, inseparable.

But lastly how not to see the essential relationship between justice and the (paternal and filial) identity obtained by faith, if it is true that to be just signifies *to be recognized and declared such* in the eyes of God? What greater justice can we obtain or receive except that of being what His word makes us because we believe in it?

### 6.4. *Rom 4: A Valid Argumentation?*

As Rom 4 is a proof from authority, it is important also to question its validity. What is the value of the technique utilized, the *gezerah shawah*? And if the response is positive, do this technique and its usage in Rom 4 respect the intention of Gen 15?

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<sup>73</sup> It is really a question of his situation, not only and above all his efforts, indeed his interior attitude, which is only emphasized at the end of the chapter (vv. 19-20), with an equal emphasis on the divine support, as the passive participle *πληροφορηθείς* (v. 21) indicates.

As I have already examined at length the validity of the usage made by Paul of the *gezerah shawah*<sup>74</sup> elsewhere and have arrived at the conclusion that, notwithstanding the differences, the formal characteristics of the exegesis made by Paul in Rom 4:1-8 belong to those of the *gezerah shawah*, here I will take this result for granted.

It was necessary to examine the validity of the scriptural argumentation of Rom 4, to the extent that later rabbinism seemed to disqualify the expanded usage that Paul made of the *gezerah shawah*. I hope to have shown how the Apostle brilliantly utilized this technique, how it also allowed him to dispel elegantly the fundamental objection that certainly would have been made, that of never directly confronting the divine order in Gen 17:10-14. Of course, the usage of the *gezerah shawah* in Rom 4 and the consequences that Paul drew from it are sizable for the Pauline doctrine of justification by faith alone but also for the status and history of believing Christians.

This being said, it will be necessary for us to reexamine the validity and the pertinence of the exegesis that Paul makes of Gen 15:6 in Rom 4 in chapter X on James 2:14-26 because in the latter passage, Paul's idea of justification by faith alone seems to be radically placed into question.

### Conclusions

There are still some exegetes that think that, in Paul's opinion, the Law was a way of salvation, and thus justification, up until the coming of Christ. Such an impression can evidently not be recommended for Rom 4 in which the continued effort of the Apostle is to show that, since the beginning, in other words, since Abraham, God justified believers without the Law.

Moreover, Rom 4 has allowed highlighting a paradox: it is the Law itself that established that, in order to obtain justification, it is not necessary to become a subject of the Law! Paul could not but compare his position with the word of God, especially with the oracle of Gen 17:10-14. Thus, Rom 4 is very logically inserted into Paul's argumentation and constitutes without any doubt the summit of the first section, which has as its goal to show in two stages that all, without exception, Jews and non-Jews, have been and are justified by faith alone:

- the first (1:18–3:20), more *negative*, beginning with human behaviors, reaches — since all are in the same category, that of sinners (3:10-18) — the conclusion that whether or not one is under the Law, that whether or not one is physically circumcised, changes nothing regarding judgment and wrath;

<sup>74</sup> ALETTI, "Romans 4 and Genesis 17".

## CHAPTER IX

### The Effects of Justification Once Again Romans 5–8 and Philippians 3

In the preceding chapters, the study of the Apostle's argumentation has consisted of setting out how the different components of justification — its origin, its recipients, its means and its modalities — are progressively highlighted. Without a doubt, Paul unceasingly emphasizes its modalities: *by faith alone and without the works of the Law*. The reason for this emphasis is ecclesial but also, and above all, salvific as Galatians 1–2 and Romans 1–4 have shown. It now remains to see if a place — and if so, what place — is made for the effects of justification. What becomes of the justified? What relationship do they henceforth have with God their Father, with Christ, with the Spirit and among themselves? What henceforth can they hope for? And lastly, can they and must they do good and to what end?

Paul has already enumerated some of the effects of justification in Gal 3:1-5 and 5:13-27, as was seen in chap. VI. It is now going to be necessary to compare these preceding results with the affirmations of Rom 5–8, a section in Romans that is still the object of totally opposing interpretations concerning the effects of justification. Once justified, are believers capable of doing good, of obeying and pleasing God as Paul asks of them? Or does not a passage like Rom 7:7-25 require admitting that, for the Apostle, justified believers remain mired in the flesh, prisoners of sin, in short *simul justi* (Rom 5, 6, and 8), *simul peccatores* (Rom 7:7-25)?

#### 1. The Effects of Justification in Rom 5–8

The first proof that Paul's thought on justification ends in Rom 4:25 appears in the verse that immediately follows, Rom 5:1: "Therefore, since *we have been justified by faith*, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ"<sup>1</sup>. Justification has been effected, and in Rom 1–4 Paul has shown how it was done. It has thus been accomplished.

After having shown at length that faith was the only modality of justification and that the Law had no role whatsoever, Paul now undertakes to describe the effects

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<sup>1</sup> In Greek, δικαιωθέντες οὖν ἐκ πίστεως, εἰρήνην ἔχομεν πρὸς τὸν θεὸν διὰ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ.

the Apostle intends to say that the Christian has difficulty doing good<sup>6</sup>; whereas the passage does not speak of a total impossibility; and one may ask what this would signify for Christians, a liberation from sin (Rom 6), which would have radically enslaved them. Indeed, one may retort: “While Paul is no longer *willingly* a bond slave of ‘sin’ (6:15-18, 22), ‘sin’, nevertheless, continues to oppress him”<sup>7</sup>. But does a liberation that changes the will alone and is not able to be realized in deeds merit this name? Yes, the Christian “feels the effects of his past existence in Adam”<sup>8</sup> because he remains subject to temptation, to weakness, to fragility, and to death, in short, he lives in the flesh, yet he is no longer under its power and no longer follows its law — he no longer lives *κατὰ σάρκα* (2Cor 10:3)<sup>9</sup>. The exegetes focused on here reply that Rom 6 and 8 are not speaking of the entire Christian experience, that they say nothing about temptation and the daily falls of believers, thus pushed to invoke and hope in the divine mercy. May one imply that Rom 7 describes this other aspect of the Christian experience, namely the gravity of the flesh, temptation, falls, etc.?<sup>10</sup> No, because elsewhere Paul never says that the Christian has been sold into the power of sin, that he lives a situation of total imprisonment and powerlessness. If he affirms that believers of the young communities are still *carnals*<sup>11</sup>, it is because they have just begun their life of faith and that Christ is not yet formed enough in them (Gal 4:19), but he never goes as far as declaring that their situation is desperate, that they are completely manipulated by sin, incapable of good — otherwise, what would be the meaning of the exhortations found throughout his letters?

However, is it not necessary to admit, with a few of those who see in Rom 7 a description of the Christian’s situation, that “Paul’s confession should serve as a reminder that it is precisely the saint who is most conscious of his sinfulness?”<sup>12</sup>. Let us clearly understand these terms.

<sup>6</sup> DUNN, *Romans 1–8*, 391ff. and 411–412. The author does not speak of a total impossibility.

<sup>7</sup> GARLINGTON, *Faith, Obedience and Perseverance*. Aspects of Paul’s Letter to the Romans (WUNT 79; Tübingen 1994) 123 (the emphasis is his). Affirmations that are practically identical to those of M. SEIFRID, “The Subject of Romans 7:14–25”, *NovT* 34 (1992) 331.

<sup>8</sup> GARLINGTON, *Faith*, 124.

<sup>9</sup> Whereas in Rom 6:19 the believer is invited, because he can, to offer his members to justice, the carnal *egō* in Rom 7:23–25 is entirely enslaved by sin in its members. With so many other exegetes, we do not see how the two situations could be applied to the same Christian actor.

<sup>10</sup> An observation, among others, made by DUNN, *Romans 1–8*, 408.

<sup>11</sup> As in 1Cor 3:1–4, for example.

<sup>12</sup> GARLINGTON, *Faith*, 125.

up a *topos* that comes from the Medea of Euripides. The verbal parallels clearly indicate that each passage is inspired by the same scenario, the first (Paul) implicitly, and the second (Epictetus) explicitly. To illustrate this point:

<i>Rom 7:14–20, 24a</i>	<i>Discourses II, 17.18–19</i>
<sup>15b</sup> <sup>19</sup> for the good that I want (θέλω) that I do not do it	<sup>18</sup> I want (θέλω) something and [this] does not happen
<sup>16a</sup> <sup>19b</sup> <sup>20a</sup> what I do not want (θέλω), I do	<sup>18</sup> I do not want (θέλω) something and [this] does happen,
<sup>24a</sup> wretched (ταλαίπωρος) man that I am	<sup>18</sup> who is more unhappy than I? (τί ἐστὶν ἀθλιώτερον ἐμοῦ;)
	<sup>19</sup> not having withstood this, Medea killed her children.

Those for whom the *egō* can only be Paul — who is writing the letter, and is thus “in Christ” — will undoubtedly be astonished to see that Epictetus, who knows himself to be free<sup>18</sup>, capable of doing whatever he wants, also speaks in the first person, *as if he were not free*, as if he were observing in himself a complete hiatus between the act of wanting and its execution. The phenomena of identification being the same in the case of both authors, it is at the least recommended to see in them the same figure, that of the *prosopopoeia*, at the cost of being completely mistaken about the function and the significance of the two passages. We have also noted the cry indicating an acute awareness of the tragedy of the situation: in Epictetus, as in Paul, it is a free subject who expresses himself as if he were the most wretched of humans. In other words, in order to be pertinent, the study of the identity of the *egō* of Rom 7 cannot be made without a comparison, even if it is short, with the corresponding passage from Epictetus, and forces us to note that on this point the commentators have regrettable lapses.

The arrangement of the entire section, let us not forget, allows revealing other clues. Rom 7:7–25 is indeed embedded between two rhetorical units describing the situation of justified believers.

A first (Rom 6:1–7:6), in which, because united to Christ, they are dead to sin and living for God (Rom 6:11, 14),

A second (Rom 8), the formulations of which are in radical contrast to Rom 7:7–25, as the following table shows.

<sup>18</sup> It is known that Epictetus belonged to the slave class, which gives a highly symbolic meaning to the passage.

<i>Rom 7:7-25</i>	<i>Rom 8</i>
indwelling of sin in the I incapacity to put into practice the divine Law to live in/according to the flesh death slavery	indwelling of the Spirit in the believers fulfillment of the requirements of the Law to live in/according to the Spirit life freedom, filiation and inheritance

From these contrasts one can conclude that Rom 7:7-25 is not describing the situation of justified believers, united to Christ and living in the Spirit, but that of a humanity not yet justified. In short, (1) the proofs furnished in favor of a Christian identity for the *egō* in Rom 7:7-25 are not only not compelling but are not pertinent; (2) it is when the idea of an *egō* without Christ (Jewish or non-Jewish) is accepted that the background of the passage becomes fully apparent, that it is both Jewish and Greek.

It is, nevertheless, more than surprising that the presentation of humanity without Christ is made in a section devoted to its opposite, the new humanity, which has been justified by and in Christ, and which with him is dead to sin and to the Law<sup>19</sup>. Why has the description of the *egō* enslaved to sin been sandwiched between the two developments on the situation of Christians, which are

- dead and buried with Christ (Rom 6:1-28)  
= believers connected to Christ,
- and inhabited by the Holy Spirit, in expectation of their glorification (Rom 8:1-30)  
= believers connected to the Holy Spirit.

Clearly the *synkrisis* is the technique used and which compellingly contrasts the two contrary situations. But does Paul thus want to lower humanity without Christ in order to better highlight the extraordinary situation of the new humanity? Several clues militate against this interpretation. Indeed, (1) the *egō* in Rom 7:7-25 is declared neither a sinner, nor a transgressor, nor an enemy of God, and in no way does Paul judge him as responsible for his state; rather, he denounces sin, which is deceitful, false, and tyrannical; (2) the description of the *egō* is made inwardly, as if, in the person of Paul, the Christian was putting himself in the skin of mortally wounded humanity which confesses its wretchedness. In short, the *prosopopoeia* prevents the misinterpretation of the *synkrisis*.

With Rom 7:7-25, the true misery of humanity is revealed. And this is really the power of the sandwich's *dispositio*: Paul only puts the Christian in the presence

<sup>19</sup> It is because the section that goes from Rom 5 to Rom 8 is devoted to the situation of those who are in Christ that several exegetes think they see in the *egō* in Rom 7:7-25 the figure of the Christian still engulfed in the flesh.



of the drama of humanity and its own contradiction after he has recalled that he himself is with Christ; it is a Christian with Christ dead to sin who can — precisely because he is no longer under sin — understand the true situation of humanity without Christ. It is the death to sin that permits him to grasp all the meanness of the latter, to describe its strategies and the extent of its tyranny. It is because the Christian himself is outside the reach of sin that he is able to speak up about the wretched man and ask for his liberation: to be dead and buried with Christ does not divert the Christian from sinful humanity; his solidarity with it does not harm him, and it is because he is united to Christ that he is able to desire the salvation of humanity and to designate him as his Savior. Thus, the *prosopopoeia* also has for its function showing the solidarity of the Christian with a humanity whose torments he knows and of which he neither wants nor is able to disassociate himself.

The sandwiched *dispositio* also shows that in Romans the anthropology is not original, as if it were the knowledge of the situation of sinful humanity that was permitting him to announce the Savior. The *dispositio* of the letter has for too long been interpreted in this way<sup>20</sup> in order not to have to recall firmly (1) that Rom 1:18 to 3:20 does not present Paul's anthropology<sup>21</sup>, (2) that the reader takes notice of Paul's anthropology only in Rom 5–8, and (3) that one is able to perceive the mystery of the old humanity (Rom 7) only beginning with the new humanity, which is in Christ (Rom 6): the letter does not stray from anthropology (specifically Pauline); it progressively leads to it.

Let us conclude these brief observations on the effect of justification in Rom 5–8 by restating that the believers have been liberated from sin and can do good; united to Christ and living in the Spirit, they are part of the family of God who is their Father.

Having said this and having proved in Rom 1–4 that justification has come by faith alone and without the Law, Paul describes the effects of justification by utilizing other semantic fields. If I am not mistaken, only once, in Rom 5:19, does he *explicitly* declare believers just (δίκαιοι)<sup>22</sup>. Not that they are not so, but the Apostle prefers the appellations “saints”<sup>23</sup>, “sons”. This undoubtedly indicates that for Paul a single semantic field is not sufficient to express the believers' sit-

<sup>20</sup> Rom 1:18 to 3:20 would describe the sin of humanity and Rom 3:21ff would present the divine response (forgiveness, justification, and salvation). On the non-pertinence and difficulties of this type of presentation, see ALETTI, *God's Justice in Romans*, 62–87.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. chapter VII on Rom 1–3.

<sup>22</sup> One other time, in Titus 1:8, in which this is required of the ἐπίσκοπος. Indirectly with the citations from Habakkuk, in Gal 3:11 and Rom 1:17.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. all the salutations at the beginning of the letters: Rom 1:7, 1Cor 1:2; 2Cor 1:1; Eph 1:1; Phil 1:1; Col 1:1, but also in the body of the letters (a total of 43x).

uation. But this also means that the argumentation concerning justification is for him only a prolegomenon to soteriology and to ecclesiology. To say that Christ is the only savior of all human beings of all time indeed implies that the affirmation is valid also (and above all) for the Jews. Today, the dialogue with religions other than Judaism requires a type of analogous thought and peregrination, even if it is no longer a question of arguing first of all, or only, about the Mosaic Law.

I have just said that Paul never addresses himself to believers by saying to them: “You, the just” or “You who are just”. Would this indicate that in his opinion believers do not have a justice of their own? As several commentators draw this conclusion from Phil 3:9, it is now necessary to revisit this verse and those around it.

## 2. The Effects of Justification in Phil 3

As has already been said, Phil 3:9 is the verse that divides commentators. Indeed, it is a question of knowing whether or not believers have a justice of their own or if their behavior is the direct effect of a justice that is Christ’s and comes from him. But in order to understand the verse better, it is important to locate it within the whole to which it belongs, a periautology — *id est*, a self-praise<sup>24</sup> — and therefore, one will begin with a brief presentation on this rhetorical unit<sup>25</sup>.

### 2.1. Paul’s Periautology and Its Raison d’Être

The overall arrangement of Phil 3:2-16 is simple since it follows the threefold plan of numerous Pauline exhortations:

<i>A</i> = v. 2	exhortations
<i>B</i> = vv. 3-4a + 4b-14	reasons that confirm <i>A</i>
<i>A'</i> = vv. 15-16	reprise of exhortations

<sup>24</sup> In addition to the *De laude ipsius* of Plutarch (*Moralia*, 539a-547f) and H.D. Betz’s commentary on it, in ID., *Plutarch’s Ethical Writings and Early Christian Literature* (SCHNT 4; Leiden 1978) 377-382, see C. FORBES, “Comparison, Self-praise and Irony: Paul’s Boasting and the Conventions of Hellenistic Rhetoric”, *NTS* 32 (1986) 1-30; M.H. QUET, “Parler de soi pour louer son dieu: le cas d’Aelius Aristide”, *L’invention de l’auto-biographie d’Hésiode à saint Augustin* (eds. M.F. BASLEZ – Ph. HOFFMANN – L. PERNOT) (Paris 1993) 211-251; L. PERNOT, “Periautologia. Problèmes et méthodes de l’éloge de soi-même en la tradition éthique et rhétorique gréco-romaine”, *Revue des études grecques* 111 (1998) 101-124.

<sup>25</sup> For a substantial presentation of the passage, see J.N. ALETTI, *Saint Paul. Épître aux Philippiens* (EB NS 55; Paris 2005) 216-263; F. BIANCHINI, *L’elogio di se in Cristo. L’utilizzo della periautologia nel contesto di Filippesi 3,1-4,1* (AnBib 164; Roma 2006), *passim*.

Part B is formed by two series of reasons, in v. 3, in “we” (ἡμεῖς), reasons based on the status of believers (what they are, *the* circumcision) and in vv. 4-14, in “I” (ἐγώ), which constitute the periautology, the components of which are *grosso modo* the same as those of the praise (in Greek, ἐγκώμιον):

- origins (family, homeland, city, nation) and birth (γένος)
- childhood, formation and education (παιδεία)
- remarkable or memorable feats from adulthood: the conduct or type of life chosen, the ἐπιτηδεύματα [mores, customs], etc.
- virtues (wisdom, temperance, courage, justice, piety; goods obtained from Fortune and type of death) noticeable thanks to actions (πράξεις).

In the first instance, more precisely through v. 6, the passage clearly follows the model of the praise:

<i>topoi</i> of the praise	Phil 3:5-6 (seven privileges)
origins	circumcised on the eighth day of the people of Israel of the tribe of Benjamin a Hebrew, son of Hebrews
education	as to the Law, Pharisee
actions	as to zeal, persecutor of the Church regarding justice that one finds in the Law, irreproachable

But vv. 5-6 form only one part of the periautology, which is divided into two parts<sup>26</sup>:

- vv. 4b, 5-6 = the privileges and values “in the flesh”
- vv. 7-14 = the total change; the new values in Christ.

The Christological part of the itinerary is also divided into two parts:

- vv. 7-11 = a change in judgment, in values, as a rejection of the first values, for three purposes: justice, knowledge of Christ, the same itinerary
- vv. 12-14 = a double *correctio* in order to avoid equivocations, in order to explain the goal pursued and the way already taken.

Beginning in v. 7, by dispossessing himself of his own privileges, Paul is following the conditions required by the self-praise: not to provoke envy or jealousy.

<sup>26</sup> V. 4 and v. 7 form the inaugural declarations of each part, and they will be illustrated by vv. 5-6 and vv. 8-14, respectively.

Indeed, if, in the first part, his privileges could arouse jealousy, in the second, he is striving entirely for Christ, having left all in order to follow closely his itinerary, towards glory through death. The praise that Paul makes of himself cannot arouse jealousy for another reason: he judges distinguished what the world considers as humiliating and contemptible — in other words, he relinquishes the privileges considered as eminent by his fellows in order to devote himself to a man who died on a cross.

## 2.2. *Can the Law Bring Justice (Phil 3:6)?*

When he describes his past as a zealous Jew, Paul declares himself to have been “as to righteousness under the Law blameless”. How is this statement to be understood? Indeed, if elsewhere, Paul declares that the Law cannot justify<sup>27</sup>, here and in Rom 10:5, he seems, on the contrary, to admit that the Law renders just whoever obeys it (or that God declares just those who carry out and love His Law), and so the coherence of the Apostle’s statements has been questioned. In order to interpret the verse correctly, it is necessary not to forget that here Paul is reasoning by repeating his point of view when he was a Pharisee; for a Pharisee, obedience to the Law caused one to become just<sup>28</sup>. And the perspective does not change until v. 7 when Paul begins to express his own convictions as a disciple of Christ.

So is it or is it not possible to observe the Law fully? By affirming to have been ‘blameless’, Paul is indirectly saying that his obedience to the Law was perfect<sup>29</sup>. If in some passages, he denies that this can be so (Rom 3:19-20; 7:7-25), in others, as in this one and Gal 1:13-14, it is possible<sup>30</sup>. Is Paul contradicting himself? As for the preceding sentence, it is necessary not to forget that the perspective is that of a Pharisee convinced that one can be irreproachable before the Law. Paul is putting himself in the skin of the zealous Pharisee that he once was and repeating his ideas from that time on the Law and the perfection required by this same

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<sup>27</sup> Cf. Rom 3:20, 28; Gal 2:16; 3:11.

<sup>28</sup> It is the same in Rom 10:5 in which the point of view is Moses’ (who Paul is having speak).

<sup>29</sup> For the reading of these declarations on his impeccability while he was a Pharisee, K. STENDAHL, “The Apostle Paul and the Introspective Conscience of the West”, *Harvard Theological Review* 56 (1963) 202, who asks if this is not why Paul speaks so little of the forgiveness of sins in his letters; once in the proto-Paulines (Rom 4:7, a citation of the Psalms) and twice in the deutero-Paulines (Col 1:14; Eph 1:7).

<sup>30</sup> See S. WESTERHOLM, *Perspectives Old and New on Paul* (Grand Rapids, MI 2004) 261-296; A.J. THOMPSON, “Blameless before God? Philippians 3:6 in Context”, *Themelios* 28 (2002) 5-12.

ἐμὴν δικαιοσύνην (“justice of my own”), is the complement<sup>39</sup> of the second and as an attribute must be preceded by an “as”; the second, τὴν ἐκ νόμου (“the one based on the Law”), which, because of the article, is the direct object<sup>40</sup>. Let us look at the Greek and the English<sup>41</sup>:

μὴ ἔχων ἐμὴν δικαιοσύνην τὴν ἐκ νόμου (δικαιοσύνην)	not having <i>as</i> a justice of my own the (justice) [coming] from the Law,
ἀλλὰ (ἔχων ἐμὴν δικαιοσύνην) τὴν διὰ πίστεως Χριστοῦ (δικαιοσύνην) τὴν ἐκ θεοῦ δικαιοσύνην	but (having <i>as</i> a justice of my own) the (justice) through faith in/of Christ, the justice [coming] from God.

The passage is formed from two participial phrases<sup>42</sup>, the first, negative, and the second, positive. But the first is no way declaring that the *I* does not have a justice but only that he (the *I*) does not have *as* justice one of his own that comes from the Law. In other words, Paul is not affirming that the Christian does not have his own justice but that *his* justice — because he does have one from now on — does not come from the Law. The passage’s opposition is not between a justice of my own — understood, as being derived from my forces or my efforts — and a justice coming from God (an offered justice) but between two opposing origins for *my* justice, namely the Law and God. In short, the opposition of the two parts of the sentence is not between ‘not having a justice of one’s own’ and ‘having God’s justice’<sup>43</sup>, but between ‘a justice (of my own, which is not exterior to me) coming from the Law’ and ‘a justice (of my own, which is also not exterior to me) coming from God (through faith)’<sup>44</sup>. Being based on the faulty reading of the

<sup>39</sup> With regard to this appellation, see M.M. CULY, “Double Case Constructions in Koine Greek”, *JGRChJ* 6 (2009) 82-106.

<sup>40</sup> The rule (of the double accusative) is the same as in v. 7, in which ταῦτα is the (direct) object of ἡγνῆμαι, and ζημίαν the complement of ταῦτα (“I counted all this *as* loss”). The same remark for v. 8 (“I count everything *as* loss”).

<sup>41</sup> The parentheses restore the Greek words and the brackets the words added for a better understanding of the sentence.

<sup>42</sup> The second participle ‘having’ (ἔχων) has been restored in parentheses.

<sup>43</sup> This opposition has recently been repeated, in slightly different terms, by MARGUERAT, “Paul et la Loi”, 270, citing in addition E. Cuvillier: for Paul, “the key of the reversal thus actually lies in the acceptance of a justice exterior to himself”. But in Phil 3:9, the believer’s justice is not exterior to himself, *only its origin*, which may be either the Law or God.

<sup>44</sup> What KOPERSKI, *The Knowledge of Christ Jesus*, 225, rightly calls “the participatory character of righteousness”, which begins with faith in Christ and which causes living in Christ, and thus sharing in the mystery of his death and resurrection.

Greek, the line of interpretation (a) noted by V. Koperski must, as a consequence, be abandoned. Another interpretation, according to which Paul was distinguishing between the role of the Law before the coming of Christ and the role of the Law after his coming, also disappears. The passage is in no way making a pronouncement on a change in the role of the Law — on what it was and what it no longer is —, but on the perception that was Paul's when he was a Pharisee and on the one that he has from now on as a result of his encounter with Christ that causes him to see and judge all things in a totally inverse way<sup>45</sup>.

In a previous article, D. Marguerat takes up the question in order to show that the Christian does not have his own justice and that justice is exterior to him<sup>46</sup>. In his opinion, this exteriority of justice is highlighted by the play of the Greek prepositions διὰ – ἐκ – ἐπί. Because, he says, “The righteousness which is Paul's own and comes (ἐκ) from the Law is opposed to the righteousness conveyed by the mediation (διὰ) of faith, a righteousness coming (ἐκ) from God and based (ἐπί) on faith. The provocative antinomy of the two clauses in ἐκ, righteousness ἐκ νόμου *versus* ἐκ θεοῦ, is obvious. The mention of faith (διὰ πίστεως Χριστοῦ) is interposed between the two, which induces a change in the status of righteousness: whereas it is guaranteed by the Law according to Paul the Pharisee's understanding of self, faith brings out another understanding where righteousness is received as gift of God”. He adds in a note: “From my point of view, the emphatic accumulation of the prepositions διὰ – ἐκ – ἐπί in 9b apparently favours the external origin of justice received by faith, whereas justice ἐκ νόμου is the only one to be explicitly quantified as ‘mine’ ”<sup>47</sup>. Whatever may be said, this reading cannot be recommended from the Greek: in this verse, it is not the prepositions that determine a correct understanding of the syntax but the attribute and the direct object of what it is the attribute. Indeed, the negation is concerned with the justice that comes from the Law and not with what comes from God, and the phrase ‘righteousness of my own’ is really an attribute of the phrase ‘the one (= the justice) coming from God’. The Greek syntax is in no way ambiguous: it is not contrasting a justice that would be mine with one which would not be, but two different origins; the justice of believers does not come from the Law but from God through faith in Jesus Christ. Another argument, this time semantic: the two justices in v. 9 both come from the exterior, one from the Law and the other from God, and one does not see

<sup>45</sup> Cf. the observation of KOPERSKI, *The Knowledge of Christ Jesus*, 236: “The basic question in understanding Phil 3:9, then, might be better stated not as ‘What is wrong with the Law?’ but rather ‘What is wrong with Paul's former perception of the Law?’”.

<sup>46</sup> MARGUERAT, “L'Évangile paulinien”, 60.

<sup>47</sup> MARGUERAT, “L'Évangile paulinien”, 60.



why the first would be said to be mine (in Greek, ἐμὴν), whereas Paul says exactly the opposite. In no way does the syntax prohibit the justice of a divine origin to qualify the believer as *just*<sup>48</sup>: being the fruit of justification, it is a justice given, received, that then becomes the justice *of the believer*.

One can only ask if, behind these opposing readings of the verse, is not hidden the question of synergy, in other words, of the capacity of the believer to obey the will of God. I hope to have shown that in order to respond to the question regarding the proto-Paulines, and in particular of Phil 3:9, it is necessary to start with morphology and syntax and not with theological preconceptions.

Nevertheless, a difficulty remains because the Apostle seems to admit that one can become just by obeying the Law. If one responds positively then the turning point in Phil 3:6-9 would consist (for Paul) of abandoning or rejecting the justice of the subjects of the Law (the Jews) in order to choose another, which comes from faith. The opposition would then be that noted by interpretation (b), between a justice through the Law or through faith in Christ. The first justice would not have disappeared — it would always be valid for subjects of the Law —; it would coexist with the second, the one based on faith in Christ. Such a configuration certainly favors the idea of those who see Paul accepting two ways of salvation, the Law for the Ἰουδαῖοι — their *Sonderweg* —, and Jesus Christ for the others. However, the parallelisms prohibit such a reading. Indeed, if one compares each part of the verse's oppositions, the last line of the column on the right does not correspond to the left. For the presence of an identical phrase would have been essential in order to be able to say that justice (coming from the Law) is also of divine origin:

not having <i>as</i> a justice of my own the one (justice) [coming] from the Law	but (having <i>as</i> a justice of my own) the one (justice) through faith in/of Christ, the justice [coming] from God.
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The only justice coming from God is thus that which is obtained by the πίστις Χριστοῦ. In short, Phil 3:9 prohibits seeing in the justice based on the Law a way of salvation willed by God and coming from Him. But how can Paul affirm that the justice coming from the Law does not come from God when the Psalms, the Prophets and, above all, the Torah repeatedly say the contrary? In Phil 3:6 and 9, let us not forget, the statements concerning δικαιοσύνη are very concise, and Paul is not intending to write a treatise on the two types of justice — but rather to speak

<sup>48</sup> Even if, as we have said above, Paul very rarely says of believers that they have become *just* (in Greek, δίκαιοι).

trophe to a fictitious interlocutor in the singular (“you who, etc.”), the *prosopopoeia* (an imaginary character is speaking) and the denigration (cf. “you foolish man” in v. 20). Those for whom vv. 18-26 form a single unit invoke the fact that vv. 21-25 are proofs and thus cannot be separated from the preceding verses, in particular v. 18, which they have the function of proving. Those who see in vv. 21-26 a distinct unit are more sensitive to the semantics of justification that appears only in these verses. As one can see, the proposed arrangement changes according to whether the argumentative or the semantic dimension is preferred. Here are some of the choices made by commentators:

<b>three sub-units</b> : vv. 14-17, 18-20 et 21-26	<b>two sub-units</b> : vv. 14-17 et 18-26
E. Ruckstuhl <sup>3</sup> H. Frankemölle <sup>4</sup>	D. Moo <sup>5</sup>

For the most recent commentary, that of J. Assaël – E. Cuvillier<sup>6</sup>, the arrangement is also tripartite, vv. 14-17, 18-19 and 20-26, but more well-founded than the preceding one: clearly v. 20, which is in opposition to what precedes it (cf. the adversative δέ), must be associated with the verses that follow because it is announcing them.

The division can also be semantic, like that proposed by J. McCarthy, according to whom there are two types of faith, dead and living, that regulate the passage<sup>7</sup>:

vv. 14-20 Dead Faith (three sub-units : vv. 14, 15-17 and 18-20)  
vv. 21-26 Living Faith (two sub-units : vv. 21-24 and 25-26).

The majority of commentators opt for the number of sub-units just listed by relying upon, as we have already indicated, rhetoric or semantics but without spending much time on their choice because, for them, the differences in the

<sup>3</sup> E. RUCKSTUHL, *Jakobusbrief 1-3. Johannesbrief* (Die Neue Echter Bibel. Neues Testament 17-19; Würzburg 1985) 18-21.

<sup>4</sup> H. FRANKEMÖLLE, *Der Brief des Jakobus* (Ökumenischer Taschenbuchkommentar zum Neuen Testament 17/2; Gütersloh 1994) 420-478: vv. 14-17 faith without works, vv. 18-20 works demonstrating faith, vv. 21-26 examples from the Scriptures illustrating faith accompanied by works.

<sup>5</sup> D.J. MOO, *The Letter of James* (The Pillar New Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids, MI 2000) 119. The author is sensitive to the dialogic nature of vv. 18-26: v. 14 an introduction to the subject; vv. 15-17 (A) and dialogue vv. 18-26 (B).

<sup>6</sup> J. ASSAËL – E. CUVILLIER, *L'Épître de Jacques* (Commentaire du Nouveau Testament. Deuxième série 13a; Genève 2013) 199-209.

<sup>7</sup> J. MACARTHUR, *James* (The MacArthur New Testament Commentary; Chicago, IL 1998) 119-142.

choices of the arrangement are of much less importance than the question of justification by works or faith and its comparison with the Pauline position. The only commentator to base his entire interpretation on the arrangement is T. Kot. The *dispositio* that he thinks must be accepted is concentric, in its entirety and in its sub-units, as the following chart indicates<sup>8</sup>:

Faith without works vv. 14-18	14 faith without works 15 the brother lacking food 16 one says to them, Go in peace! 17 without giving the things needed 18 you who have faith, I who have works
Resembling demons v. 19	
Works of faith vv. 20-26	20 faith without works = barren 21 Abraham allusion to Gen 22:9-10 22 you see that faith = made perfect by works 23 citation of Gen 15:6 24 you see that justification = by works 25 Rahab allusion to Josh 2:9-11 26 faith without works = death

Thus, the thought turns upon v. 19, the semantic center of the passage, which is for this reason entitled “Works and Demonic Faith”<sup>9</sup>. What is striking about this reading is its failure to take into consideration the particles that denote the argumentation. If it is true that the adversative coordinating conjunction in v. 20 (δέ) can indicate the beginning of an opposing unit in v. 19, it is clear, on the other hand, that v. 18 cannot conclude the unit that would be constituted by vv. 14-18: a conclusion never begins with an adversative particle (in Greek, ἀλλά), and what is more, v. 18 introduces the proofs constituted by the examples in vv. 19-25; the imperative “show me” (δείξόν μοι) and the future “I will show you” (σοι δείξω) clearly indicate that proofs are going to be furnished and that they will be examples<sup>10</sup>. In short, v. 18 begins an argumentative unit. And if, as all admit, Jas 2:14-26 is an argumentation, it is the criterion that allows pinpointing the sub-units constituted by the proofs. Thus, the two positive examples in vv. 21-25 form two sub-units linked by two adverbs and a coordinating conjunction (ὁμοίως δὲ καί in v. 25) that clearly are inviting the reader to discern two proofs and thus put vv. 21-24 together.

<sup>8</sup> I am using, by reducing it to its simplest expression, the summary table of Kot, *Jacques*, 112.

<sup>9</sup> Kot, *Jacques*, 103.

<sup>10</sup> In Greek, παραδείγματα. It will be noted, of course, that the Greek root is also the same.

known. And even here the progression is perceptible because, from the negative example illustrating faith without works, one passes to those in which faith is accompanied by good works; if the first is negative and very brief, the following two examples of Abraham (Gen 22 and 15) and of Rahab (Josh 2:1-24) are positive and more developed in order to emphasize the importance of good works for justification. Thus, the rhetoric is in an ascending progression. Contrary to the view of the most representative commentaries which consider vv. 21-25 the third unit of the passage (after vv. 14-17 and 18-20), the *chreia* indicates that these verses are inseparable from those that precede them, in particular v. 18, which they illustrate and prove.

In short, the pattern of the *chreia* is the best choice because it allows taking into account the different components of the argumentation, its organization and its progression. But why has James chosen this pattern in preference to others?

#### 2.4. *Why the Chreia as a Pattern of Argumentation?*

If James has chosen the *chreia* in order to present his thesis and its accompanying reasons, it is, first of all and without a doubt, because this type of argumentation was taught in all the schools as a part of the elementary exercises, the *progymnasmata*, and, therefore, was widely known. Thus, there was a greater chance that this pattern would be recognizable by those contemporaries for whom rhetorical formation was the norm.

But what is even more effective is to look for the reason for the use of the *chreia* in the components of Jas 2:14-26 themselves. Thus, the initial question clearly indicates to the reader that what is in question is a subject debated in the Christian communities of the day: if justification is obtained by faith alone, is it necessary to conclude that works have no salvific purpose? Like those questions posed to Jesus in the Gospels, the question in Jas 2:14 reflects a disagreement existing between and internal to the communities of the first century A.D.

And any debate on faith and works cannot but echo the positions of the Apostle Paul. Certainly, as several exegetes have shown, one cannot find in the Pauline letters a statement saying that for Christians good works are useless — Gal 5:6 explicitly says, in effect, the opposite: what matters is “faith working through love”. Nevertheless, the thesis of Jas 2:17 and the scriptural allusions/citations of Gen 22:9 and 15:6 that accompany it are not due to chance; clearly they are alluding to Gal 3:6 and Rom 4:3, 9, 22.

Thus, the *chreia* allows James to discuss and criticize an opinion that refers to the Pauline letters even if it does not come from them. But because his thesis is expressed in the form of a maxim, and not as a specific *chreia* — which would require naming the author of the opinion cited, as noted by Theon and the other

author? James, the brother of the Lord, whose name is not Greek in origin and who lived in Palestine of that time? One will certainly respond in the negative. But could not James, the brother of the Lord, have dictated his ideas to a hellenized amanuensis and given to the latter the care of writing and composing them according to the rules then in place? This is possible on the condition that the amanuensis had read the Scriptures like a Jew of the time. And only recently, another hypothesis has been suggested<sup>23</sup>, that of pseudepigraphy. The study of the arrangement of Jas 2:14-26 is not sufficient for pronouncing with certainty on these two positions, both of which are completely plausible.

### 5. Justification in Paul and the Hermeneutical Question

With a number of commentators, we have ascertained above that Paul and James are not speaking of the same thing and that it is for this reason erroneous to oppose them. But if James believed he had to oppose the erroneous interpretation that was then being made of Paul's doctrine on justification, this means that, very early on, the ideas of Paul were separated from their original problem, namely circumcision and becoming a Jew for the believers converted from paganism, and that the discussion no longer concerned the value and salvific role of the Mosaic Law. In other words, from the phrase "apart from the works of the Law" (RSV), only the "apart from works" was retained and the "of the Law" was dropped.

A few exegetes, as we have seen, think that if the word "Law" is not expressly mentioned, it, nevertheless, remains as the backdrop of the discussion and that the problem remains fundamentally the one expressed in the proto-Paulines. But, as we have shown, it cannot be so because the case described in Jas 2:15-16 is referring to believers that have *already been justified*, assembled for prayer and who ought to do good. The shift in the problem is notable: it is no longer a question of knowing if one can be justified without becoming a Jew — without doing the works required by the Law —, but if faith alone suffices, or whether or not it must be expressed by charitable behavior.

Is Jas 2:14-26 hardening or systemizing a situation that those it is criticizing thought not to be contrary to charity? It is possible, but the example in vv. 15-16 clearly shows that the attitude in question goes against the Gospel. It is made, nevertheless, by utilizing Paul's vocabulary of justification in a different way, and thereby following those he is criticizing and for whom faith alone justifies. Where is the change? For Paul, justification is that of sinners — those who by believing in the Gospel become members of the Church by Baptism. It is a gift from God

<sup>23</sup> Cf. ASSAËL-CUVILLIER, *Jacques*.

and is accompanied by the forgiveness of sins. But, unlike what the formulation of Jas 2:24 is implying, Paul never says that Christians are justified by their good works because they have already been justified, and their works add nothing to a justification already effected by God when they believed in the Gospel and were converted.

Moreover, Jas 2:14-26 does not allow determining the exact position of those it is criticizing, in other words, to know if they only dissociate faith and works, or if they go as far as declaring that good works are useless for obtaining salvation, that ethical behavior thus has no connection to salvation. As the reader can realize, if the debate is still far from being focused on the capacity or incapacity of Christians to do good, it is, nevertheless, already removed from the Pauline problem, essentially centered on the connection to the Law.

In order to support his position, James, nevertheless, appeals to Gen 15 and 22 that belong to the books of the Law. And it could not have been otherwise because he also had to show that, from the beginning, from its first mention, from Gen 15:6, faith could not be separated from works. But, if it was necessary for him to have recourse to Abraham's faith and to the works that it engendered, he could not have but placed Gen 15:5-6 and Gen 22:16-17 in relation to each other and interpreted them by each other because it is the latter passage, and thus Abraham's behavior, that seems to explain *a posteriori* the reasons for the promise and the justification that were stated anteriorly<sup>24</sup>:

Gen 15:5-6

[God said to Abraham] "Look toward heaven, and number the *stars*, if you are able to number them". Then he said to him, "So shall *your descendants* be".<sup>6</sup> And he believed the Lord; and he reckoned it to him as righteousness.

Gen 22:16-17

[God said to Abraham] "Because you have done this, and have not withheld your son, your only son, <sup>17</sup> I will indeed bless you, and I will multiply *your descendants* as the *stars* of heaven and as the sand which is on the seashore".

The same passage, Gen 15:5-6, is thus utilized and interpreted differently by Paul and by James. For Paul, these verses witness to a justification by faith and without works (of the Law), and for James, they attest that justification happens by works (of faith). Even if the situations presented by Paul and James are different and if the position of the second does not invalidate that of the first, their interpretation of Gen

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<sup>24</sup> Trans. RSV. The italics highlight the words common to the two passages and the reasons that allowed ancient Jewish authors to connect them.



15:5-6 is, however, not compatible. Indeed, James is calling justification what Paul would not; of course, for him, faith is effected by charity (Gal 5:6), but it is thus operating in a situation of justification already obtained or received, whereas for James there is justification each time there is a good work. Without critiquing in detail James' position, let us recognize that utilizing the same terminology for different realities can only provoke ambiguities and misunderstandings.

This being said, by emphasizing the works of faith, Jas 2:14-26 invites not being mistaken about the effects of justification as conceived by Paul: justified and guided by the Spirit, believers are rendered capable of loving their neighbor and must act as a consequence (cf. Gal 5:22).

## Conclusions

This chapter has demonstrated that the choice of a pattern of arrangement has a real impact on the meaning of a passage and the understanding that one must have of it. The choice of a *chreia* allowed James to repeat an opinion that had become common in some Christian communities and to criticize it, showing that it was erroneous. By presenting the common opinion as a maxim (γνώμη), he did not need to cite Paul and thereby avoided attributing to him what was only an erroneous recapitulation of his doctrine of justification.

Since other rhetorical units of the letter follow Greek rhetorical models, the reader is invited to verify that the author of this letter knew how to reason according to the rules of arrangement then in place in the schools and elsewhere, rules that he uses with originality. The author's rhetoric is not Semitic: for him, Greek is not only a language or a style but also what structures the development of his thought.

Jas 2:14-26 also shows that very early on Paul's ideas on justification had spread among some communities but that on some important points they gave rise to erroneous interpretations that were undoubtedly caused by the complexity and originality of the Apostle's thought and that the resulting corrections, instead of clarifying the debate, only led to further confusion.

NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
NTOA	Novum Testamentum et Orbis Antiquus
<i>NTS</i>	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
<i>RivBib</i>	<i>Rivista Biblica</i>
<i>RQ</i>	<i>Revue de Qumran</i>
RSV	Revised Standard Version
SBL	Society of Biblical Literature
SBL DS	SBL Dissertations Series
SCHNT	Studia ad Corpus Hellenisticum Novi Testamenti
SMB SBE	Serie Monografica di 'Benedictina' Sezione Biblico-Ecumenica
SNTS	Studiorum Novi Testamenti Societas
SNTS MS	SNTS Monographs Series
TSAJ	Texte und Studien zum Antiken Judentum
<i>TZ</i>	<i>Theologische Zeitschrift</i>
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
<i>ZNW</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>
<i>ZTK</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche</i>